USA $12.99 EUROPE €11.99 UK £8.99 2017#2 WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

# NEW IN CHESS

READ BY CLUB PLAYERS IN 116 COUNTRIES

**Wijk aan Zee:**
**Wesley So tops Magnus Carlsen**

**Judit Polgar**
**under the spell of Larsen's rook pawns**

**Star analysis**
Hikaru Nakamura
Levon Aronian
Wesley So
Hou Yifan
Anish Giri
Wei Yi
MVL

**Nigel Short**
**Kirsan and Agon revisited**

**Nakamura's**
**third win on the Rock**

**Interview**

## Adhiban Baskaran

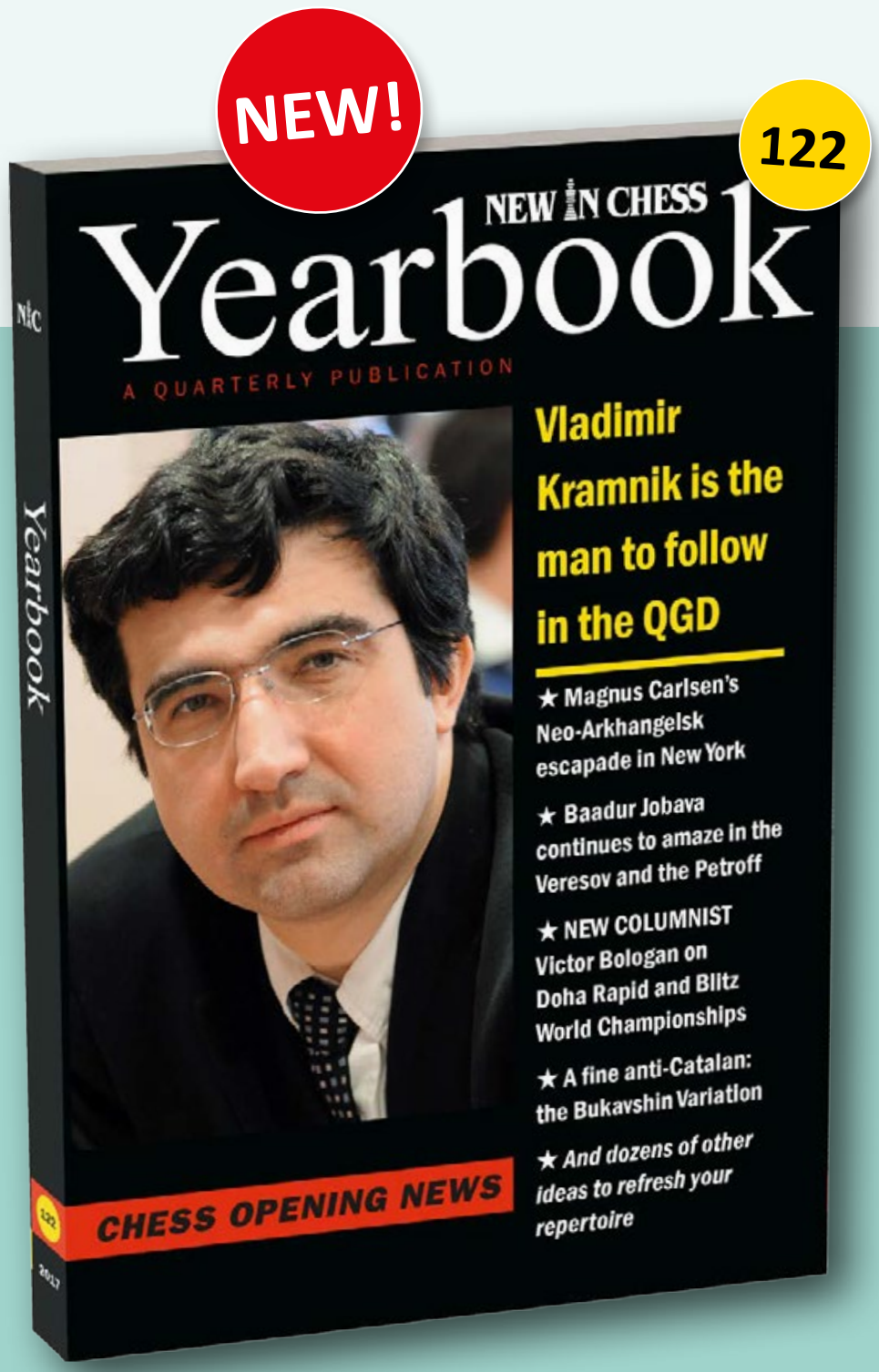
# 'I get inspired by super-hero movies'

ISBN 978-90-5691-730-2

GAWAIN JONES QUALIFIES FOR TATA STEEL MASTERS ★ THE LIFE AND LONG CAREER OF HENRY E. BIRD ★ JUST CHECKING ANNA RUDOLF

# “There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.”

**– *British Chess Magazine***


NEW!
122
NEW IN CHESS
Yearbook
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
Vladimir Kramnik is the man to follow in the QGD
★ Magnus Carlsen's Neo-Arkhangelsk escapade in New York
★ Baadur Jobava continues to amaze in the Veresov and the Petroff
★ NEW COLUMNIST Victor Bologan on Doha Rapid and Blitz World Championships
★ A fine anti-Catalan: the Bukavshin Variation
★ And dozens of other ideas to refresh your repertoire
CHESS OPENING NEWS

Paperback | 256 pages | € 29.95
available at your local (chess)bookseller
or at newinchess.com

★ *New layout for even better accessibility*

★ *New columnist: Victor Bologan*

★ *Lots of instructional exercises*

With answers to urgent questions such as:

- **Who played the Novelty of the Year 2016? And who invented it?**
- **How did Olympiad top scorer Andrei Volokitin set fire to the solid Fianchetto Grünfeld with black?**
- **How serious is Baadur Jobava’s early pawn sacrifice 3...d5 in the Petroff?**
- **What are the advantages for Black of postponing the d-pawn push against White’s d4, c4 with a fianchetto?**
- **Can White pose Black problems with an early ♗d2 in the Rubinstein Nimzo?**
- **How does Kramnik win with black in solid QGD’s?**
- **Is Fabiano Caruana’s pet antidote to the Arbakov Attack in crisis?**
- **With which Richter-Veresov line did Baadur Jobava outplay some strong opponents at the Baku Olympiad?**
- **How can White play for a pleasant edge in the Réti Slav?**
- **Was Magnus Carlsen wise to play the Neo-Arkhangelsk in the World Championship match?**
- **What is Bartel’s deadly recipe against the Najdorf?**
- **Is Black comfortable in the Rossolimo with 8...f5 ?**
- **With which stunning idea in the Panov Caro-Kann did Alexander Grischuk surprise Vidit Gujrathi?**
- **How did Viswanathan Anand neutralize Wesley So in the trendy 4...♘bd7 QGD?**
- **With which amazing concept did Yakovenko improve on Nakamura’s play in the Open Catalan?**
- **With which clever anti-Slav move Ivanchuk beat Magnus to win the World rapid title?**

# Book Now! Prices will go up soon.

**October 15-29, 2017 (14 days)**

Copenhagen-Miami

**May 11-25, 2018 (18 days)**

Miami-Los Angeles

## NEW IN CHESS Tournaments at Sea

Fourteen days on the Norwegian Getaway:
**Copenhagen – Azores – Caribbean – Miami**

**New In Chess** and highly experienced German chess travel organizer **GM Jörg Hickl**, CEO of **Schachreisen**, will organize a chess tournament at Sea in October 2017.

You will travel from Copenhagen to Miami and play a seven-round Elo-rated chess tournament with a view. This is a Premium All Inclusive trip, including all meals and drinks and the high quality entertainment program of the Cruise Ship.

Prices starting from € 1.549 per person. Premium All Inclusive, including tips and alcoholic beverages.

Eighteen days on the Norwegian Bliss:
**Miami/USA - Panama canal - Los Angeles/USA via Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico**

Organized by New In Chess & Schachreisen, you will play a seven-round Elo-rated chess tournament. There will be a special chess programme as well.

This special trip will cross the Panama Canal. You will board the Norwegian Bliss, a new ship that will start sailing in 2018!

Prices start at € 2.249 per person. There is only a limited number of cabins available and the trip is expected to sell out in the next weeks.

SCHACH REISEN

For further information go to

**www.newinchess.com/travel**

9th International Chess Open

# CAPO D'ORSO

ACP Association of Chess Professionals

3-10 June 2017

**Make your (chess) dreams come true –** Porto Mannu is an amazing bay east of Palau and the Archipelagus of **La Maddalena** in Sardinia, minutes away from the **Emerald Coast, Porto Cervo** and **Porto Raphael**. It is the perfect place for an unforgettable chess&vacation experience: white sand beach, swimming pools, spa, and excellent Italian food, wine and hospitality!
And then there is the chess: spacious air-conditioned playing hall, pool cloth, wooden chess sets and boards and friendly atmosphere!

**Regulations & Prizes –** 9-round ACP Tour Swiss. IMs and GMs invited plus an **ACP wild card**. Rate of play: 90'x40 moves+30'+30"/1. Prizefund € 8200. Special ACP, grading, women, seniors & U14 prizes. Games generally start at 3 pm. Porto Mannu is a friendly and cheating-free environment: strong anticheating measures will be put in place for your safety and comfort.
**Entries –** Please use our one-stop registration facility on our site: Visa/Mastercard accepted!
**Detailed info – http://portomannu.caissa.it**

**Hotel –** All guests will be lodged in the Porto Mannu Resort, within walking distance from the playing hall, the sea and all leisure facilities in 2-3 room apartments or double rooms. **Prices for full board** (continental breakfast plus gorgeous and abundant Italian meals) **have been kept exceptionally low** considering the location and season (**€ 63/day**, drinks not included) and are only valid 2-10 June 2017. Free beach amenities when booking on or before 17 March (appr. value € 70).

**IF THERE IS ONE TOURNAMENT YOUR WIFE WOULD BE BEGGING TO GO TO, PORTO MANNU MUST BE IT!**

**Hotel info: +39 019669879**
**e-mail: info@portomannu.com**

**TOURNAMENT WEBSITE**
**portomannu.caissa.it**

**Chess info: +39 3400634399**
**e-mail: portomannu@caissa.it**


BREVI DISTRIBUZIONE INFORMATICA
SIATEC Software gestionali e automazione
LeMieNozze.it
Messaggerie Scacchistiche
BALDASSARE AGNELLI BERGAMO
PENTOLE AGNELLI PROFESSIONAL COOKWARE
MADE IN ITALY
PortoMannu.com
LeonardCohen.it
CAISSA ITALIA
yeb! DIGITAL SOLUTIONS
SINERGIA24 VALORE D'IMPRESA
NASTROTEX CUFRA SPA Produzione nastri elastici per abbigliamento intimo sportivo e calzatura
ASM FONDAZIONE ASM Gruppo a2a
SPANAKIS


**Hotel info: +39 3351980630**
**e-mail: gianvper@caissa.it**

**TOURNAMENT WEBSITE**
**bergamo.caissa.it**

**Chess info: +39 3400634399**
**e-mail: bergamo@caissa.it**

## Several GMs and IMs are invited

Bergamo is an amazing art city.
Come and visit the hometown
of Donizetti and Caravaggio!

**6 rounds - Prizefund € 5500**

ASD Caissa Italia
*in cooperation with*
ASD Antoniana Bergamo

FIDE
Federazione Scacchistica Italiana
ITALIA CONI

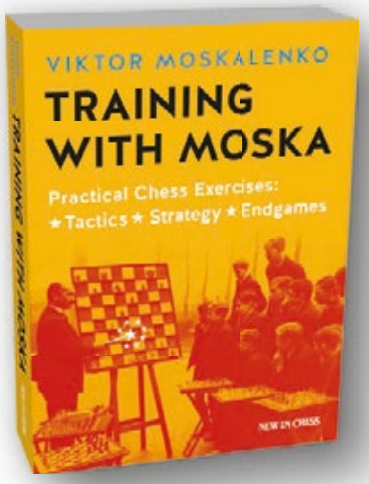
# Bergamo 2017
# International Chess Open

14-16 July 2017

BERGAMO CITTÀ DEI MILLE
ASD CAISSA ITALIA

NEW IN CHESS

# Current Bestsellers



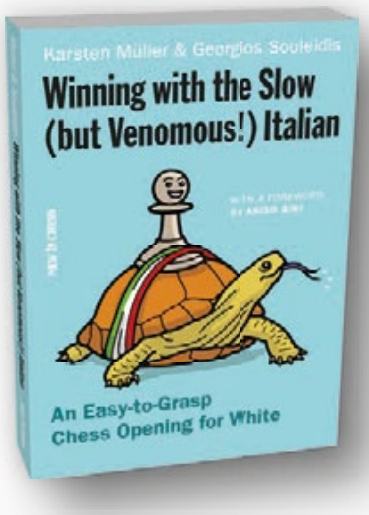

## Training with Moska

*Practical Chess Exercises: Tactics, Strategy, Endgames*

**Viktor Moskalenko** 336 pages - €27.95

The best instructive material Moskalenko collected while working with amateurs for three decades. If you have an Elo rating between 1400 and 2100, this book will help you make a big step forward!

"It is always fun to be instructed by Viktor Moskalenko, as he has such a fresh and creative approach!"
*GM Karsten Müller*




## Winning with the Slow (but Venomous!) Italian

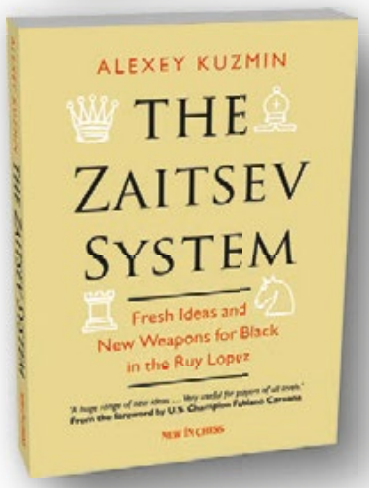
*An Easy-to-Grasp Chess Opening for White*

**Karsten Müller & Georgios Souleidis** 240 pages - €27.95

It may look innocent, but is actually full of venom. Ideal for club players and world champions: Magnus Carlsen plays it, too!

"The basic principles, the plans and the concepts as well as the model games will help many ambitious chess lovers." – *GM Anish Giri*

"Contains some highly powerful ideas."
*Dirk Schuh, Rochade Europa Magazine*



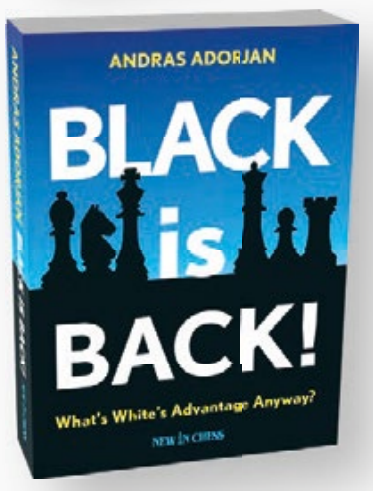

## The Zaitsev System

*Fresh Ideas and New Weapons for Black in the Ruy Lopez*

**Alexey Kuzmin** 256 pages - €27.95

"A huge range of new ideas. Very useful for players of all levels."
*Fabiano Caruana*

"A very useful educational tool for people starting out with the Zaitsev System. Contains a wealth of original ideas."
*Peter Svidler*




## Black is Back!

*What's White's Advantage Anyway?*

**Andras Adorjan** 288 pages - €22.95

"Quirky, eccentric, different. Never dull. Like author, like book."
*Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine*

"A book that makes you think. Adorjan's arguments are convincing: White's opening advantage isn't self-evident."
*Mark Haast, Schaaksite.nl*

available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

## CHESSBASE ACCOUNT:

Access the world of ChessBase from wherever you are 24/7!

### PLAYCHESS
The ultimate chess experience

### LIVE DATABASE
Professional research: 8 million games online

### MY GAMES CLOUD
Your one-stop cloud storage area

### FRITZ ONLINE
Your browser-based chess engine

### VIDEOS
Private Masterclasses

### OPENINGS
Welcome to modern opening preparation

### TRAINING
Calculate, sacrifice, mate

### ENGINE CLOUD
Top engine on the best hardware

### LET'S CHECK
Knowledge is mate: 200 million analyses

### CB NEWS
The world-renowned chess news portal

# CHESSBASE 14

**Everyone uses ChessBase, from the World Champion to the amateur next door. Start your personal success story with ChessBase 14 and enjoy your chess even more. Available on DVD-ROM or as download.**

From "A" for analysis to "Z" for zugzwang: there are in the new ChessBase 14 program a whole heap of improvements which make the entry and analysis of games all the more easy, as they do the production of training or practice material. The new function "Assisted Analysis" is an outstanding example: as you enter a game, whenever you click on a piece an evaluation is produced for all its possible target squares and this is highlighted on the board in colour. Thus even before you play it you can see whether there is a better move than the one you planned. This not only makes entering moves easy, but it also invites you to participate in subtle and continuous calculation training.

Also new in ChessBase 14 is the access to annotated games in the Live Database. In conjunction with a Premium Account you can even find complete analysis of many topical games from the elite tournaments. And because the Live Database has become more and more important in the search for comparable games, now as you play through a game ChessBase 14 updates the search results automatically on every move.

Other improvements: new game notation with diagrams and coloured highlighting in encapsulated variations, one login for all ChessBase servers (playchess, ChessBase Cloud, Let's Check, ChessBase Accounts), analysis of a whole game with rapid error search, saving of the search mask, export of the diagram list as a Word document produces training material in a jiffy, automatic analysis jobs from correspondence games, simplified production of training questions, the search for similar structures now made interactive, replacing games in big databases considerably speeded up, improved search for doubles, easy use of tool to activate Fritz-Trainer and Engines, and much more.

## THE NEW CHESSBASE 14 PROGRAM PACKAGES

### STARTER PACKAGE 189,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Big Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for half a year (3 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Six months Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts

### MEGA PACKAGE 279,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Mega Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for a full year (6 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Full year Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts

### PREMIUM PACKAGE 379,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Mega Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for a full year (6 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Full year Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts
- Corr Database 2015
- Endgameturbo 4

### UPDATE FROM CHESSBASE 13 TO CHESSBASE 14 99,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Three months Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts

ChessBase GmbH · News: en.chessbase.com · CB Shop: shop.chessbase.com
**CHESSBASE DEALER: NEW IN CHESS · P.O. Box 1093 · NL-1810 KB Alkmaar**
**phone (+31)72 5127137 · fax (+31)72 5158234 · WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM**

# Contents

2017#2
NEW IN CHESS

**8** Jakarta Street Life

**10** NIC's Café

**13** Your Move

**14** Infographic

**15** Fair & Square

**16** Living the dream
As if he is casually checking off dream goals on a bucket list, Wesley So is going from strength to strength. In Wijk aan Zee the 23-year-old American reached a new milestone as he claimed another super-tournament, for the first time finishing ahead of the World Champion.

**36** Interview: Adhiban Baskaran
Meet 'the next big thing from India'.

**44** Push those rook pawns
Judit Polgar in the footsteps of Bent Larsen.

**47** Maximize Your Tactics

**48** A fresh Bird's view
In his career, which spanned five decades, Henry Bird (1829-1908) was a tireless promotor of the game. His victims included Staunton, Steinitz and Lasker.

**56** Tata Steel Challengers
Gawain Jones qualified for the 2018 Masters and happily shares his adventures in a chess-crazy village.

**68** Miguel Najdorf
Hans Ree on the memoir written by Don Miguel's daughter Liliana.

**70** Rock 'n' Roll
Hikaru Nakamura and Ju Wenjun were the big winners in the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival.

**83** Celeb 64: Benny Andersson

**88** Chess Pattern Recognition

**90** Still Writhing In Agon(y)
Nigel Short cannot believe why hardly anyone wants to see what is there for everyone to see.

**92** S.O.S.: Tromping the Slav

**94** Launch pad
Jan Timman takes a look at two talents that debuted in Wijk aan Zee.

**102** Sadler on Books

**106** Just Checking
What is Anna Rudolf's favourite square?

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE**
Levon Aronian, Adhiban Baskaran, Jeroen Bosch, Anish Giri, Eric Hansen, John Henderson, Gawain Jones, Dylan McClain, Hikaru Nakamura, Maxim Notkin, Arthur van de Oudeweetering, Judit Polgar, Markus Ragger, Hans Ree, Hans Renette, Anna Rudolf, Matthew Sadler, Nigel Short, Wesley So, Jan Timman, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Wei Yi, Hou Yifan

**PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS**
Alina l'Ami, Maria Emelianova, Lennart Ootes, Sophie Triay, Berend Vonk

**COVER**
Cover: Adhiban Baskaran: Alina l'Ami

SUBSCRIPTIONS: p. 105 COLOPHON: p. 13

'Reach for the stars – hard work and passion can take you anywhere.'

'I like all the super-hero movies actually. Sure, Batman, all these Marvel movies. I'm a big fan. First it's nice to see them conquer their fears and overcome the impossible. I feel I can also do this in real life. So I get the inspiration from all those movies.' – *Adhiban Baskaran*

# Jakarta Street Life

Many travellers to Indonesia tend to ignore the capital city of Jakarta like the plague, treating it simply as a place to catch a flight or train somewhere else as quickly as possible. But for some, amidst all the chaos and disparity, this vibrant city has hidden charms that are not so easily revealed to newcomers.

Among those who return again and again is WGM Alina l'Ami, not only a strong player but also one of the game's top photographers. Alina makes her annual pilgrimage to Jakarta because she's become a regular attender of one of her favourite tournaments, the JAPFA International Chess Festival, held at the Hotel Kartika Chandra and regarded as Indonesia's longest-running international event.

No matter how many times she returns, she always finds something that will take her by surprise - and in doing so, during her most recent trip to Jakarta, Alina found herself being caught up in her own street-scene photo!

In the middle of nowhere, at night, hunted by mosquitoes and bothered by the hot weather, she couldn't refuse the kind offer of a friendly coffee and a game of chess. ■

# NIC's Café

## No Pants Chess

The 'No Pants Subway Ride', that started off as a prank in New York in 2002 by the Improv Everywhere comedy collective, has blossomed to become a regular global event. Now every January hundreds of thousands take part, giving their fellow commuters an eyeful by travelling sans pants or skirts on subway rides. According to the organizers, the 'No Pants Subway Ride' has become a humungous annual flash mob in the metros of dozens of cities around the world, including London, Boston, Berlin, Prague and Warsaw.

DAVE BECKERMAN

**What a laugh! No Pants Chess in Union Square, New York.**

But the craze is advancing and you are not safe simply by avoiding the subways, as the same day has also been dubbed 'No Pants Day', which is basically the same thing but not strictly limited to the subways. As a result we now also have 'No Pants Chess', a phenomenon that was captured for us in Union Square, Manhattan, by New York street photographer Dave Beckerman.

Trouble is, in NYC it generally falls either the day after or even during a snowstorm and comes with single digit wind chills. Brrr!

## Parisian walkways

In Amsterdam, they have two landmarks named after famous former Dutch chess champions. You can take a scenic stroll over the Hein Donner Bridge, which naturally enough will lead you onto Max Euwe square. But now the word on the rue is that Paris is getting in on the chess landmark business, with the suburb of Asnières-sur-Seine set to be immortalised with the names of former World Champions Anatoly Karpov and Vladimir Kramnik.

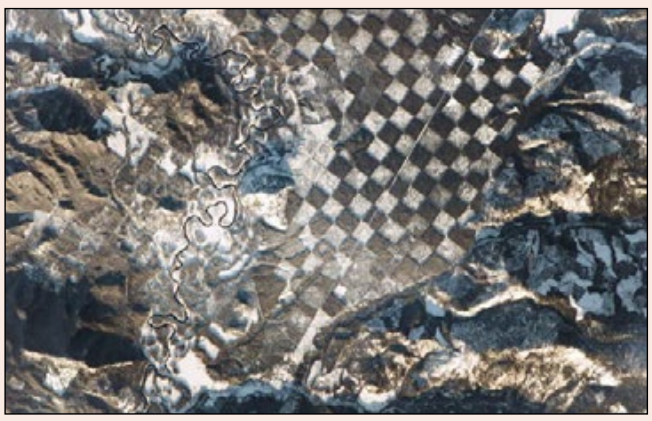
The city council recently adopted the proposal of Mayor Manuel Aeschlimann, a long-time chess fan. 'Russian players have always been among the best players in the world, consistently achieving brilliant victories in international tournaments, and are a great example for young people', the Mayor said as he announced his novel initiative.

The two Russian former world champions are no strangers to the area. Last year Karpov gave a simultaneous in Asnières-sur-Seine with the students of the local chess club for the 'Days of Moscow' festival in the French capital. And before he moved to Geneva three years ago, Kramnik used to live in the French capital with his Parisian wife and family.

## Houston, we have a (chess) problem...

In early February, the astronauts glancing out the window of the International Space Station reported back to Mission Control in Houston that they had spotted something extraordinary: a giant chessboard stretching across part of the planet's surface.

The astronauts did not actually spy a giant chessboard, of course. Rather patches of deforestation in Idaho created the checkered pattern, according to NASA. The white squares showed where snow had fallen on deforested ground, while the alternate dark areas showed dense forest.



**Space Station with a view: a giant 'chessboard' in northern Idaho.**

Dividing parcels of land in a checkerboard pattern was first agreed upon in in the 1800s, when the U.S. government granted alternate 1-square-mile (2.6 square kilometres) parcels of land to the Northern Pacific Railway.

In a recent blog, NASA officials at the agency's Earth Observatory wrote: 'These parcels were later sold off and in many cases harvested for timber. The checkerboard – which has since evolved to the one-quarter-mile (0.4 km) squares shown here – is now seen as a method of maintaining the sustainability of forested tracts while still enabling logging companies to harvest trees.'

## Hijabs at home and abroad

The hijab, that somewhat controversial veil traditionally worn by Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family, triggered controversy with a boycott of leading players for the Women's World Championship in Tehran, Iran – and it continues to cause further controversy.

This is what happened when Mehrdad Pahlevanzadeh, the head of the Iranian Chess Federation, looked in on one of his country's top teenagers playing at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival. There, Dorsa Derakhshani looked just like any other teenager playing on the Rock – but the 18-year-old found herself being banned from the national team after she was caught playing and then interviewed on the official live broadcast while not wearing a hijab, which she has refused to wear.

And for good measure, Derakhshani's younger brother Borna, 15, who was also playing in Gibraltar, was similarly kicked off the team. His

offence was agreeing to play an Israeli opponent, which is a strict no-no in the country that doesn't recognize Israel as a state.

Pahlevanzadeh told the Fars News Agency: 'Our national interests have priority over everything. As a first

LENNART OOTES

**The Iranian chess authorities banned Dorsa Derakhshani from the national team for not wearing a hijab at the Gibraltar Chess Festival.**

step, these two will be denied entry to all tournaments taking place in Iran. And, in the name of Iran, they will no longer be allowed the opportunity to be present on the national team.'

So, er...um...FIDE, shouldn't you actually be doing something about all this? I mean, Gens una sumus and all that.

## Put-in a good word

In these politically volatile times, Garry Kasparov is a popular guest on American television. A couple of weeks ago, the former World Champion – wearing his hat as chairman of the Human Rights Foundation – was on C-SPAN as he gave evidence to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee. And a couple of days before that, he popped up on John Oliver's 'Last Week Tonight', as the English satirist linked him in with Putin and Donald Trump.

And before that, controversial Republican Iowa Congressman Steve King had the chutzpah to argue on CNN that Russian leader Vladimir Putin was not nearly as bad as his critics made him out to be, noting that he never murdered one of his prominent critics, namely a certain Garry Kasparov!

Yet despite Kasparov and Putin being bitter enemies, it seems that during the latter's knuckleduster and polonium tea-serving KGB years, the Russian president-to-be was a big Kasparov cheerleader, who wasn't afraid to 'put-in' a good word for Garry where it mattered, as we discovered reading Steven Lee Myers' new book, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*.

On the subject of the first K-K match in 1984/5, the author quotes from a known colleague of Putin, that: 'Almost all of the KGB cadre rooted for Karpov, the reigning champion and lauded hero of the Soviet Union. They thought that Kasparov, who was excoriated in the official press as the match unfolded, was an "extremely dangerous upstart". Little Volodya (Putin's nickname), on the other hand, showed "dangerous sympathy" for Kasparov. He relished his ultimate victory and was not afraid to say so.'

When we asked Kasparov if he wanted to comment about what could have been a missed bromance, he duly obliged, telling us that, 'If the story is true, and I have my doubts, it fits Putin's character in supporting the underdog. But he had plenty of chances to reach out to me personally before he became president, especially when I visited his boss Anatoly

**Garry Kasparov on John Oliver's Last Week Tonight show.**

Sobchak in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1996, and it didn't happen. Maybe the whole story is contrived, like so much of Putin's background, in order to cultivate this or that image.'

## The Chess Super Bowl

Readers will recall that we recently featured American pro-footballer John Urschel in our Celeb 64 column (see New In Chess 2016/8). Well, it seems that a 'Chess Super Bowl' showdown could be on the cards, as the Baltimore Ravens' guard threw down a chess challenge to fellow pro, Le'Veon Bell.

It all came about after Bell, the Pittsburgh Steelers' star running back, featured in a recent prank video for DraftKings, where – heavily disguised

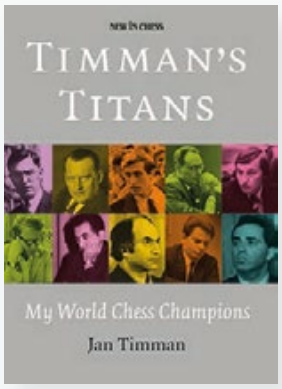
**You thought, who's that nerdy professor? It's Le'Veon Bell!**

in a nerdy fashion – he went undercover as his alter-ego of 'Professor Bell' to challenge members of the Pittsburgh Chess Club.

Like Urschel, Bell loves playing chess in his free time and told DraftKings he sees a lot of similarities between his game on the football field and on the chess board, as it's 'all about being patient, methodical, waiting for the right moment and then making his move.'

After Bell's video aired just a couple of weeks before the Super Bowl, Urschel, who is well-known for his intellectual pursuits off the field, tweeted: 'If you ever want a game, I'm down.' And 'Bam!', we just can't wait for legendary football broadcaster John Madden to feature that particular showdown on Monday Night Football! ■

# NEW IN CHESS bestsellers




### Timman's Titans
*My World Chess Champions*
Jan Timman 320 pages - €26.95

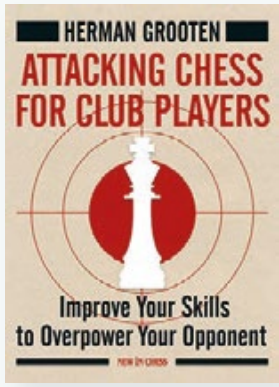
"One of the finest chessbooks that have recently been published."
*Jeroen Bosch, Schaakmagazine*

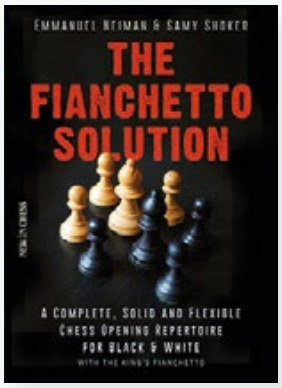
"Full of anecdotes I have never seen elsewhere. Entertaining and instructive, 'Timman's Titans' is also Timman's finest."
*Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine (UK)*

### Attacking Chess for Club Players
*Improve Your Skills to Overpower Your Opponents*
Herman Grooten 352 pages - €27.95

"A really stimulating book with quite original ideas in how to develop the skills that we need when we're attacking. Not only very instructive, but really good fun as well."
*GM Daniel King*

"Succeeds and amuses, and is truly suitable for players of all levels."
*IM Frank Zeller, SCHACH Magazine*





EMMANUEL NEIMAN & SAMY SHOKER
THE FIANCHETTO SOLUTION
A COMPLETE, SOLID AND FLEXIBLE CHESS OPENING REPERTOIRE FOR BLACK & WHITE

### The Fianchetto Solution
*A Complete, Solid and Flexible Chess Opening Repertoire*
Emmanuel Neiman & Samy Shoker 272 pages - €22.95

"A good help to obtain a playable repertoire."
*German Correspondence Chess Federation*

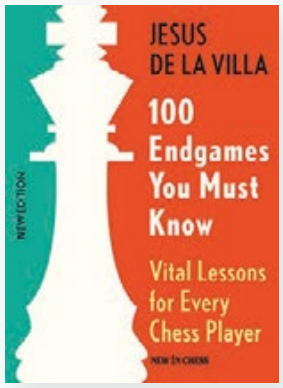
"The authors are not just presenting theory and new developments. They also explain lots of strategic ideas."
*Dirk Schuh, Rochade Europa Magazine*

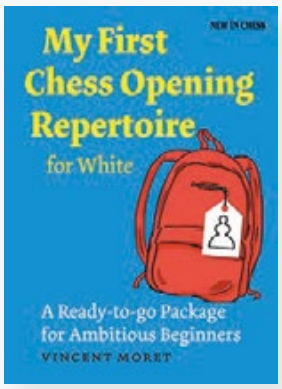
"An excellent textbook for the majority of us mortals."
*B.H.Wilders, Nederlands Dagblad*

### 100 Endgames You Must Know
*Vital Lessons for Every Chess Player*
Jesus de la Villa 254 pages - €22.95

"If you've never read an endgame book before, this is the one you should start with."
*GM Matthew Sadler, former British Champion*

"If you really have no patience for endgames, at least read '100 Endgames You Must Know'."
*Gary Walters Chess*




### My First Chess Opening Repertoire for White
*A Ready-to-go Package for Ambitious Beginners*
**Vincent Moret** 176 pages - €19.95

"Simple systems for White about which the author explains many ideas, structures and typical manoeuvres."
*Florian Jacobs, Max Euwe Center Amsterdam*

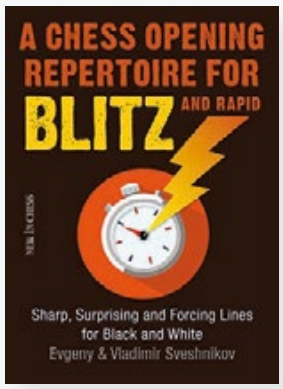
"A relatively easy to learn yet reasonably sharp set of lines which could certainly be effective at club level."
*Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine (UK)*

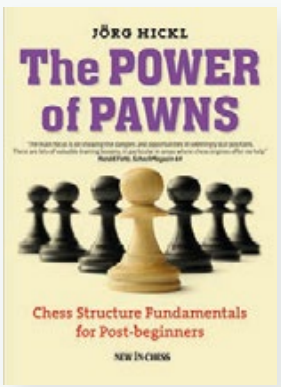
### A Chess Opening Repertoire for Blitz and Rapid
*Sharp, Surprising and Forcing Lines for Black and White*
**Evgeny & Vladimir Sveshnikov** 416 pages - €27.95

A repertoire for club players that is forcing, both narrow and deep, and aggressive.

"There is lots of analyis AND lots of explanatory text."
*Dennis Monokroussos, The Chess Mind*

"The whole project is such a clever idea: Why hadn't anyone else thought of this before?"
*GM Glenn Flear*


A CHESS OPENING REPERTOIRE FOR BLITZ AND RAPID
Sharp, Surprising and Forcing Lines for Black and White
Evgeny & Vladimir Sveshnikov




### The Power of Pawns
*Chess Structures Fundamentals for Post-Beginners*
**Jörg Hickl** 192 pages - €18.95

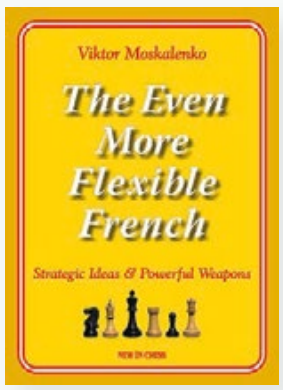
"The didactic concept of the book is admirable. Each chapter defines the structures, explains the typical characteristics and shows the plans for both White and Black. The reader invariably receives useful tips for practical play."
*Harry Schaack, KARL magazine*

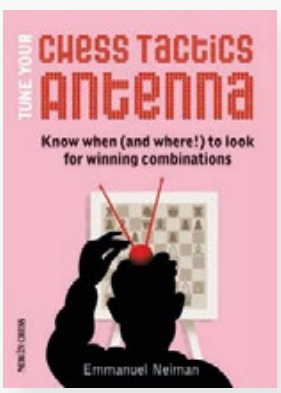
"There are lots of valuable training lessons, in particular in areas where chess engines offer no help."
*Harald Fietz, SchachMagazin 64*

### The Even More Flexible French
*Strategic Ideas & Powerful Weapons*
Viktor Moskalenko 368 pages - €26.95

"Moskalenko does an excellent job of explaining what Black is aiming for and the 103 model games this book is structured around make it more user friendly for amateur players than the traditional opening book."
*IM John Donaldson*

"All French players wishing to refresh their repertoire should examine this work, both for new ideas in the main lines and some tricky surprise weapons." – *CHESS Magazine*




### Tune Your Chess Tactics Antenna
*Know when (and where!) to look for winning combinations*
**Emmanuel Neiman** 240 pages - €24.95

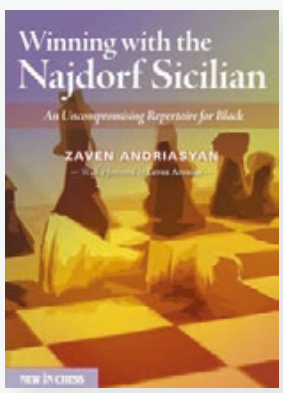
"This book is very much aimed at pratical play: what to look at, how to think, how to find good moves."
*Olivier Pucher, FIDE Master and chess trainer*

"The material is very accessible and will suit players of all strengths looking to 'tune their tactics antenna'."
*Marshtower Chess Reviews*

### Winning with the Najdorf Sicilian
*An Uncompromising Repertoire for Black*
Zaven Andriasyan 256 pages - €24.95

"Entertaining and instructive. One of the very best opening books I've ever seen."
*Sam Collins, Chess Today*

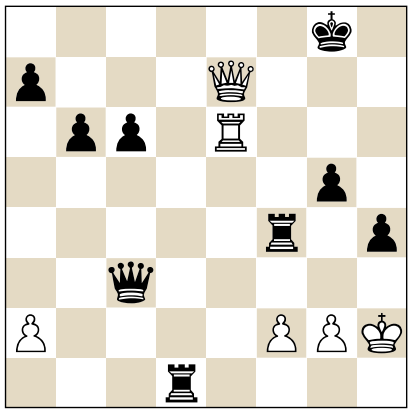
"I learned new things not only for Black, which is what you'd expect, but for White too. An excellent resource for players around 1900-2000."
*Dennis Monokroussos, The Chess Mind*




available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

## Another great predecessor

In New In Chess 2017/1, in response to a letter asking about predecessors of Carlsen's 50.♕h6!, the last move of his World Championship match against Karjakin in New York, you quoted the game Popov-Novopashin (Beltsy, 1979, 32.♕h6!). But there is also the game Vyzmanavin-Tukmakov (Soviet Union, 1986), which, I think, featured a much better example of this elegant mating combination.



**Vyzmanavin-Tukmakov**
position after 34.♔h2

And here Tukmakov forced White's resignation with the fine 34...♕h3+!.

Klaus Eckler
Krefeld, Germany

## Totally incorrect

In the article on Timur Gareyev's blindfold simul world record (New In Chess 2017/1, page 81), you wrote under my picture that I said this was 'the best day of my life'. But that is totally incorrect and I did *not* say that. I have said that it was *one of* the best days of my life. I would place my win against Timur in the blindfold simul in my top 15 of best events, but definitely not call it the best.

Marius Gabriel Lucan
Coltone, CA, USA

## The evolution of chess

As players are confronted with increasingly shorter time controls, even the brief delay between deciding a move and executing it physically on the board is becoming more important. As we see in the report by Simen Agdestein on the Rapid and Blitz World Championships (New In Chess 2017/1) even top grandmasters struggle with Blitz time controls of 3 minutes +2 seconds increment. I confess to reading about some of the blunders with glee!

Seen against a backdrop of robotic prosthetics now being controlled purely by thought ('Prosthetic Limbs, Controlled by Thought' – *The New York Times*) and neuron regeneration via the nano-scale electronic scaffolds that can be injected via syringe ('Injectable electronics' – *Science Daily*) one might extrapolate how chess might be played in the future.

Conceivably we might find ourselves by-passing the process of lifting a chess piece and placing it on its new square – completely. This would open the way to having still faster time controls without the present physical limitations, e.g. knocking pieces over in a time scramble.

It is a fact that the technology already exists whereby magnetic chess pieces can be moved by remote control and don't collide during automatic movements. So moves on a physical chessboard can already be made by via touchscreen or clicking on a computer screen.

I see no possible reason why these concepts should not be combined together at some point in the future. Then you can imagine games being played at the 'speed of thought', whilst the audience can still enjoy the sight of two players playing OTB chess – blunders and all!

Richard Sugden
via e-mail

## Chess table

That was an interesting photograph in New In Chess 2017/1 on page 99, in Jan Timman's tribute to the late Mark Taimanov. I would speculate it is a pre-match meeting to approve the chess set and table. The latter is of a unique design and in the photograph, the white inlaid section appears to slope away from the board probably due to an optical illusion. There are also strange raised diamond shaped features at each end of the table. A photograph of the match in progress, in a theatre, also shows those features, which suggests this was the table used.

David Tucker
London, UK

## Editorial postscript:

Your suggestion that the photo was taken before the match makes a lot of sense. It certainly explains the proximity of the arbiter, who no doubt didn't sit so close during the actual games. The table, with soft cushions for both players to rest their hands on, seems to be inspired by the tables used at the Havana 1966 Olympiad. These tables also served as an inspiration for the famous table used by Spassky and Fischer in Reykjavik in 1972. ■

**Write to us**

**New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093**
**1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands**
**or e-mail: editors@newinchess.com**
**Letters may be edited or abridged**


**COLOPHON**

**PUBLISHER:** Allard Hoogland
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:**
Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
**HONORARY EDITOR:**
Jan Timman
**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:** Anish Giri
**EDITORS:** Peter Boel, René Olthof
**ART-DIRECTION:** Jan Scholtus
**PRODUCTION:** Joop de Groot
**TRANSLATORS:** Ken Neat, Piet Verhagen
**SALES AND ADVERTISING:** Remmelt Otten


© No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.


**NEW IN CHESS**
**P.O. BOX 1093**
**1810 KB ALKMAAR**
**THE NETHERLANDS**

**PHONE:** 00-31-(0)72-51 27 137
**E-MAIL:**
**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** nic@newinchess.com
**EDITORS:** editors@newinchess.com
**SALES AND ADVERTISING:**
otten@newinchess.com

**BANK DETAILS:**
**IBAN:** NL41ABNA 0589126024
**BIC:** ABNANL2A in favour of Interchess BV, Alkmaar, The Netherlands

**WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM**

# Streaks of Invincibility

In January, Wesley So, who now plays for the United States, won the Masters section of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, ahead of a world-class field. It was his third elite tournament victory in the last six months, following wins in the London Classic in December and the Sinquefield Cup in August. Just as impressive as his streak of tournament victories was that he ran his unbeaten streak in elite competition to 56 games.

That is a lot, but he has a long way to go before he can break the record, which belongs to Mikhail Tal, the ex-World Champion, as shown in the following graphic. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

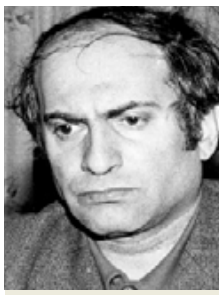
**Most classical, or slow, games played in competition without a loss**

**Mikhail Tal**

95 games

October 1973 - October 1974

Though the former World Champion was obviously a great player, it is a bit remarkable that Tal heads this list as he had a highly risky style of play and often took chances.



**Mikhail Tal**

86 games

July 1972 - April 1973

Tal obviously enjoyed a resurgence in the early 1970s that would take him to the No. 2 ranking in July 1973. He had another spurt in the late 1970s, rising to No. 2 again in the January 1980 rating list.

**Milan Drasko**

84 games

October 2006 - September 2007

Definitely the least likely name on this list. Drasko, a Montenegro grandmaster, did not play against top grandmasters during his streak, but by the end, he had raised his rating to 2557, a career best.

**Vladimir Kramnik**

82 games

January 1999 - July 2000

The streak was just before his title match against Garry Kasparov – a match in which he went undefeated to win the title. That was the first time that a challenger had ever done that. Given how solid Kramnik is as a player, his presence on this list is not a surprise.

**Wang Yue**

82 games

March 2008 - December 2008

He has faded a little in recent years, been eclipsed by younger players, and has not played as much since he started to work as a trainer, so it can be easy to forget that he was once seen as China's great hope. Indeed, in January 2010, he became China's first player to break into the world's top 10. His style is highly technical and risk-averse, which is one reason he was so hard to beat during his streak.

**José Raúl Capablanca**

63 games

1916 - 1924

Capablanca won the World Championship during the streak (a 14-game match against Emanuel Lasker). He was called a machine during this period for his technical skill. One reason his streak was not longer was that there were fewer elite tournaments than there are now.

**Wesley So**

56 games

July 2016 - present

In addition to winning the Sinquefield Cup, London Classic and Tata Steel tournaments, So also did not lose a game in the Isle of Man tournament (tied for third) and the Chess Olympiad (in which he played all 10 rounds). His last loss was to Magnus Carlsen.

**Magnus Carlsen**

42 games

November 2015 - April 2016

The reigning World Champion's longest streak is well short of some of his rivals.

# Fair & Square

**Richard Newman**: 'For the uninitiated, MMA can look like two guys inside a cage – where contests typically take place – going hell for leather. In reality it's a lot more chess-like. You always have to be thinking two or three moves ahead.'
*(So says the British mixed martial arts fighter in the Guardian)*

**Werner Heisenberg**: 'Hitler has a chess endgame with one rook less than the others, so he will lose - it will take a year.'
*(The German physicist, who was a big chess fan, writing to a friend in 1942. And 'Heisenberg' was the alter ego of drug dealer Walter White in Breaking Bad, because the Nobel laureate was famous for his 'uncertainty principle')*

**Homer Simpson**: 'The reason that I got in to chess was because it didn't involve running!' *(In reply to Magnus Carlsen's 'Homer, I'm afraid you cannot run away from chess' in the chess-themed episode The Cad and the Hat)*

**Nicolas Chamfort**: 'People are governed with the head; kindness of heart is little use in chess.'
*(The French Revolution-era playwright and conversationalist)*

**Zenna Henderson**: 'If God wanted humans to play chess, he would have made us black or white.'
*(The American science fiction and fantasy author)*

**GM Igor Kovalenko**: 'Chess is hell in paradise. Chess is life, and chess is a fight. Therefore, chess is a fight for life!'

**Bob Ferguson**: 'Even if you are a very good chess player, your opponents, if they are a good opponent, will sometimes surprise you with a move they play, or you will underestimate the move they play. That's a really good experience to have.'
*(The Washington state Attorney General, who gained international exposure recently after winning a travel ban court case against President Trump, explaining to the media how his chess skills can be good in politics. In the mid-1980s, Ferguson was a two-time Washington state chess champion)*

**Eliza Dushku**: 'Yes, I'm a chess nerd too.'
*(So says the American actress, who starred in Buffy the Vampire Slayer. She got the bug while shooting the TV show Dollhouse in 2009)*

**Eloisa James**: 'Chess is the most intimate game in the world. It's like making love. By the time we finish our first slow game, I will know all his thoughts.'
*(The pen name of the New York Times best-selling Regency and Georgian romance writer, in her 2007 book Desperate Duchess. Her real name is Mary Bly, professor of English Literature at Fordham University)*

**Virginia Alison**: 'If I had wanted to be a pawn in a game, I would have taken up chess…'
*(The English romance novelist, famous for her 'Heavenly Scent' series of books)*

**Peter Thiel**: 'In this one particular at least, business is like chess. Grandmaster José Raúl Capablanca put it well: to succeed, "you must study the endgame before everything else."' *(The chess-loving Silicon Valley venture capitalist, in his 2014 business book Zero to One)*

**Mike Carlson**: 'Sometimes American football is like a head on clash of heavy cavalry, sometimes it's like a chess match. The best games tend to be a combination of both, and this one, while tending toward the chess match, may offer the kind of battle which turns one or two failed opportunities, one or two turnovers, one or two mistakes, into the deciders.'
*(The BBC's NFL television pundit, accurately previewing the Super Bowl LI showdown between Atlanta and New England. It was, as Carlson predicted, a bit of both, as New England staged a dramatic late comeback to win the first overtime Super Bowl)*

**Rebecca Solnit**: 'I think of voting as a chess move, not a valentine.'
*(The American writer and activist, in her column for The Nation magazine, explaining the importance of voting as a strategic choice rather than a solemn duty)*

# living the dream

# Wesley So wins 79th Tata Steel Masters ahead of Magnus Carlsen

As if he is casually checking off dream goals on a bucket list, Wesley So is going from strength to strength. In Wijk aan Zee the 23-year-old American reached a new milestone as he claimed another super-tournament, for the first time finishing ahead of the World Champion. While So imperturbably took the chances that came his way, Magnus Carlsen showed some cracks in his armour and was visibly unhappy that he did not win Tata Steel for a record sixth time. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from the Dutch chess mecca.

On the last free day of the Tata Steel tournament I am having lunch at Sonnevanck, a relaxed restaurant close to the beach. It's a beautiful day, cold and sunny, not at all living up to the windy reputation of Wijk aan Zee. At the next table, a group of amateur players is talking about their games, reasonably satisfied about the ones they won and still in disbelief about the totally winning positions they bungled. At a table close to the children's corner, where the floor is strewn with toys, a Russian delegation is huddled together staring at a laptop. As Dmitry Andreikin, Ian Nepomniachtchi and coach Alexander Motylev deal with chess matters, Andreikin's wife keeps an eye on their playing daughter, who has just aroused the curiosity of a local toddler.

**The second 'Chess on Tour' outing took the players to the Frans Hals Museum and the Philharmonie concert hall in Haarlem, where Wesley So increased his lead to a full point by beating Radek Wojtaszek.**

Running into chess players is unavoidable in this small seaside village of some 2,400 inhabitants. They are everywhere. In the cafés, on the beach, certainly in the only supermarket, and definitely in Tarantella, the highly popular pizzeria, in the evenings. Most of the participants in the amateur events commute, but hundreds of chess players fill the hotels.

If you want total chess, this is the place to be. No wonder that it's one of few top events in the world that also attract lots of spectators.

With three rounds to go, Wesley So is leading, and in the remaining games he will defend his position to clinch perhaps his most impressive victory to date. So is happy to be in Wijk aan Zee, where he made his debut in 2009, winning the C-Group. Over the years he's been coming here with his entire family. The only change they made this year, his seventh visit, is that they switched from Hotel Zeeduin to Hotel Het Hoge Duin.

And of course Wesley himself has undergone a change. He's become stronger and more stable. The structure he has given his training and working with his new coach Vladimir Tukmakov, are paying dividends. Just look at the stats. In 2015 he lost a total of 20 games, in 2016 only two. His last loss was against Magnus Carlsen in Bilbao, last July.

In Wijk aan Zee he was in danger of losing only twice. Against Pavel Eljanov, the hero of the early rounds with a 3½/4 start, he got into trouble but fairly comfortably made a draw. And he even won the one game in which he was clearly lost against Richard Rapport, when in a wild position the Hungarian failed to spot a computer move that was the only road to fame.

Magnus Carlsen is also a Wijk aan Zee devotee. Arriving from a 10-day holiday at a luxury resort in the Maldives, the Norwegian didn't mind staying in a more mundane hotel on the Dutch coast. He, too, made his debut here winning the C-Group, in 2004. Last summer, he even paid

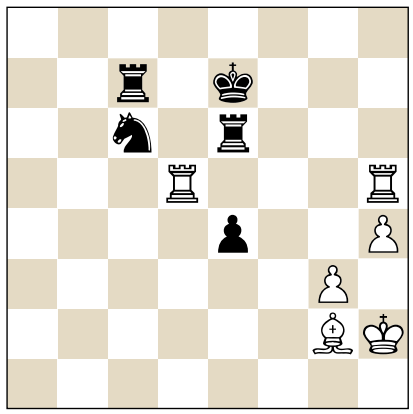
a surprise visit on his way to the Grand Chess Tour event in Leuven, wanting to see what the village looks like in different weather. The World Champion relishes the chess atmosphere, and no doubt also the traditional football match that is mainly organized for him, but his unmistakable goal was to win first prize and shake off Vishy Anand, with whom he shares the all-time record of five wins each.

In addition, he no doubt wanted to leave a sovereign impression after failing to dominate the recent World Championship match. The Tata organizers were happy to have both contestants from New York in the Masters, but it was evident that Sergey Karjakin's ambitions would be relatively modest. The Russian challenger surprised friend and foe with his tenaciousness, but he knows that not even his biggest fans in Moscow suddenly expect him to start winning super-tournaments, especially so close after having given everything in an energy-draining battle. Karjakin's next big challenge is the 2018 Candidates tournament, where he hopes to qualify for a second title match.

The match in New York left undeniable traces in the approach Carlsen chose in Wijk aan Zee. Instead of his trademark maximalist strategy, he continued his match strategy, going for solid and safe draws with Black and looking for his chances with White.

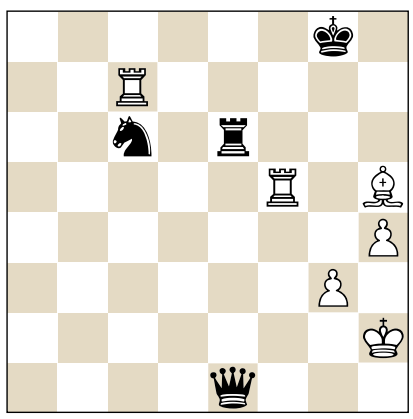
The emphasis on defence in New York met with sharp criticism from Anatoly Karpov, who visited the Tata Steel tournament as a guest of honour in the final weekend. According to Karpov, for the first time in the history of the World Championship the players had worked harder on perfecting their defence than on finding attacking ideas for White. As a result, White hadn't achieved anything to be proud of in any of the games.

This could not be said, however, about Carlsen's achievements here. True, he was not trying to win every game, but he did win his first two White games against Wojtaszek and Wei Yi. And he was doing fine in his third White game against Anish Giri. Very fine, in fact, since he reached a completely winning position. We can only speculate about the reason why he didn't win it. Very few of the kibitzers at home, who obviously saw the mate in three indicated by their computer, would have found it in one of their own games, but you can be sure that, on a good day, Magnus Carlsen would have seen it.

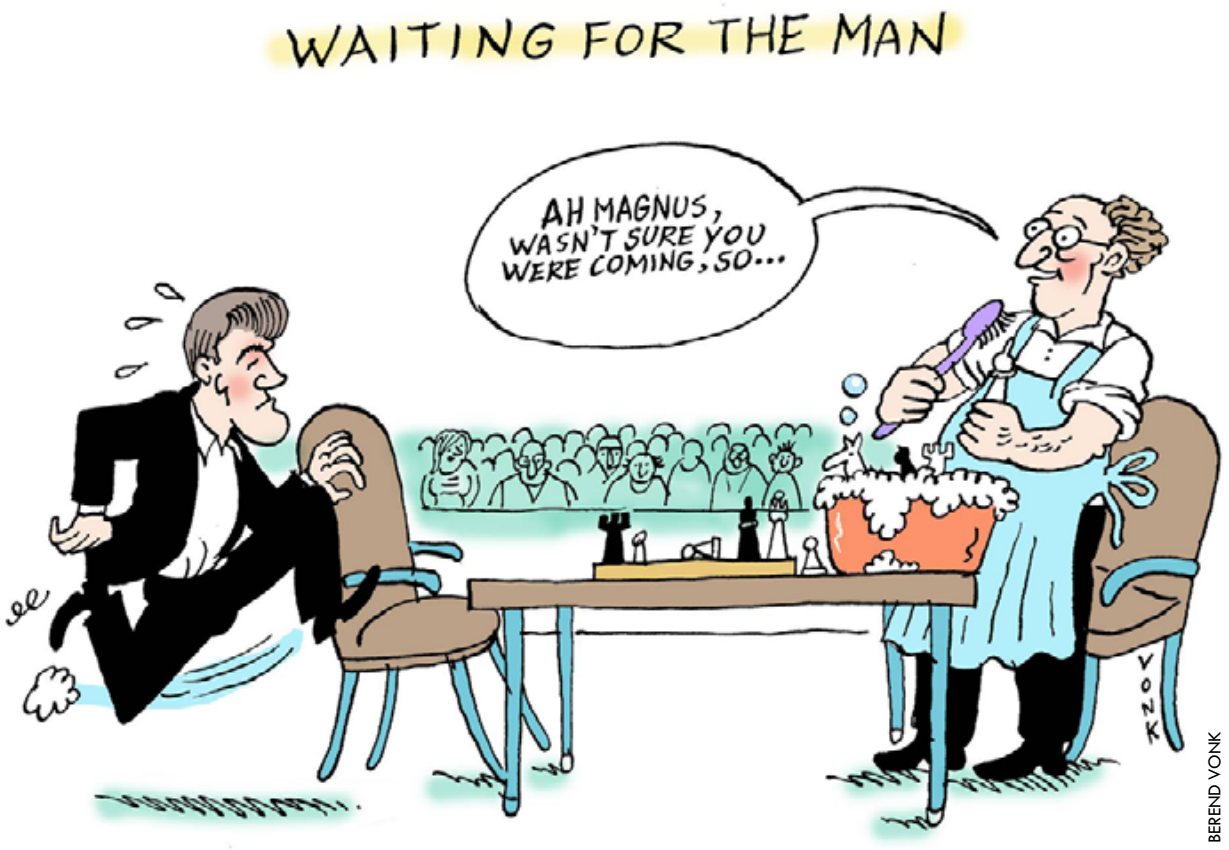


**Carlsen-Giri**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (7)
position after 50.♖xh5

**50...e3** What else? Giri offers the rook on c7, hoping the pawn will cause some confusion – and that he won't get mated. **51.♖h7+ ♔e8 52.♖xc7 e2 53.♗f3** The correct move. The queen will not save Black if White mates him. **53...e1♕ 54.♗h5+ ♔f8 55.♖f5+ ♔g8**



**56.♗f7+** And Black's bluff works. Carlsen misses the mate after 56.♖c8+ ♔g7 57.♖f7+ ♔h6 58.♖h8 mate. So Black would have to play 56...♖e8, which is totally hopeless after 57.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 58.♗xe8. **56...♔h8 57.♖h5+ ♔g7 58.♗xe6+ ♔f6 59.♖h6+ ♔e5 60.♗h3 ♕d2+ 61.♗g2 ♕xh6 62.♖xc6** And Giri managed to hold the endgame of queen vs. rook, bishop and two pawns. Draw after 123 moves.




BEREND VONK

Carlsen left quickly, and Giri, who had not seen the mate either, expressed his immense relief by confusing the press. Suppressing a smile, he told the press officer: 'This is the most embarrassing moment in the chess career of Magnus Carlsen. Because no one is interested in me, but he is a legend. I really feel bad for him.' And to a Norwegian journalist, who had asked what this result would mean for their relationship: 'That's hard to say, as I am already married.'

It was also hard to say what must have hurt the top seed more, this oversight or the game that Carlsen lost the next day against Richard Rapport. This time he did play for a win with Black, but his attempt backfired when he tried too hard.

Instead of scoring two wins and taking the lead, Carlsen had a true horror weekend that only yielded him half a point. He accepted his disappointments gracefully, exchanging variations with his opponents and only showing his annoyance with himself as he left the venue. But his frustration kept growing and was there for everyone to see at the closing ceremony, where he barely spoke to anyone, and a couple of times put his head on the table as if he was too tired to sit straight. He even forgot to congratulate the tournament winner.

The World Champion's focus on his own thoughts and ambitions, can turn into oblivion and a lack of awareness of the world around him. As has become his wont, he continued to come late to almost every game, a habit that few opponents minded, despite the fact that it was against the rules stipulated in their contract. Still, there was also annoyance. This year, the two 'On Tour' rounds were played in Rotterdam, in the Feyenoord stadium, and in Haarlem, in the Philharmonie concert hall. The grandmasters were taken there by coach, with some of them having the privilege of a private car. On the day they visited Haarlem, there was a serious delay. Since the coach couldn't leave until the private cars were ready to follow, several grandmasters voiced their anger that Carlsen kept them waiting for 45 minutes, before he finally slipped into his car.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

**The missed mate in three against Anish Giri and his failed attempt to win the ensuing endgame, not only affected Magnus Carlsen. More than seven hours of play and 123 moves took their toll and both players lost the next day.**

Despite his 'horror weekend', there was no reason for Carlsen to despair. He was trailing So by one point, but the pairings in the final rounds made it clear that the fight was still wide open. Wesley So had been using all the chances that came his way, but the American is not yet a dominant champion like the Norwegian, who can put pressure on any opponent if he wants to. And the next day Carlsen reduced the gap to half a point by ruthlessly crushing Loek van Wely.

As So beat Wojtaszek in Round 10 and Carlsen survived a dubious Dutch Stonewall to defeat Eljanov with Black in Round 12, the difference was still half a point at the start of the final round.

But Carlsen was not the only one half a point behind the leader, as he shared second place with Levon Aronian and Wei Yi. No fewer than four players could still win. A long and tense day seemed to be in the offing since, for the first time in history of the tournament, there would be rapid and blitz games to determine the winner in case of a tie for first place. This historical first seemed quite likely, given the fact that Wesley So was Black against Ian Nepomniachtchi. The winner of the 2016 Tal Memorial had been struggling so far, but why would he lose with White in a situation in which he had nothing more to gain?

Wei Yi seemed to have a golden opportunity to end on a high note, playing White against Wojtaszek. Except for his loss to Carlsen, the former prodigy had played really well, and why would this not be his chance to win his first super-tournament?

And what about Levon Aronian, four-time winner and one of the most successful participants ever in Wijk aan Zee? The Armenian had shown sparks of his old self and was no doubt extremely motivated to fight for a possible fifth victory. He was Black against the solid Andreikin, but the Russian was still without a win and might be affected by the pressure. Here, too, anything seemed possible.

Both Wei Yi and Aronian fought hard, but both lost. The Chinese kept trying, but in the end it was he who plunged himself into the abyss. And Aronian took risks, but it was Andreikin who profited. Chess can be cruel.

Both games lasted a long time, but in the end the outcome no longer mattered. Wei Yi and Aronian dropped back to third place, which they shared with the amazing Adhiban Baskaran. With a win against Wojtaszek, the Indian rounded off a fairy-tale debut in which he beat Karjakin and missed a win against Carlsen. What can we say? Adhiban was perhaps the biggest sensation of this year's edition. If you want to get to know him better, don't miss the interview we had with him.

## Move 9

And so, although it had looked as if the final day was going to be a long affair, possibly going into extra time, no such thing happened. Essentially everything was decided after one hour.

As fate would have it, Carlsen and Karjakin met again in the final round, with the Norwegian in a must-win situation. Under pressure, as he likes it. A win would be a telling postscript to the match in New York and most likely earn him a tiebreak with Wesley So, a tiebreak that might pave the way to his sixth Wijk aan Zee triumph.

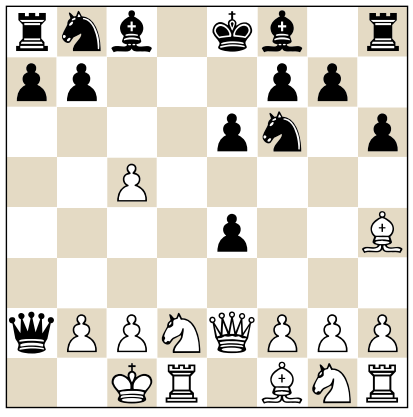
The game had barely started when, on move 9, Carlsen sacrificed a piece to clear the way to the black king. It was an audacious and exciting decision, but it yielded him little, not only because Karjakin didn't lose his composure and defended successfully to reach a draw after 53 moves, but also because the 9th move in Nepomniachtchi-So was even more dramatic. In an over-optimistic attempt to finish with a bang, Nepo started an adventure that almost instantly left his position in ruins.

**Ian Nepomniachtchi**
**Wesley So**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (13)
Trompowsky Attack

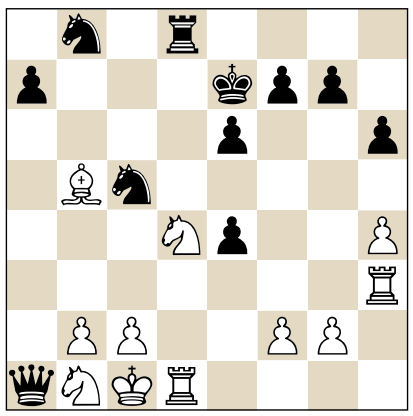
**1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.dxc5 e6 5.e4 h6 6.♗h4 dxe4**

**'What that crisis consists of, and how big it really is, is probably something only Magnus Carlsen knows.'**

**7.♕e2 ♕a5 8.0-0-0?!** 8.c3 would give White an edge. **8...♕xa2**



**9.♕b5+?** This queen sortie only makes Black happy. It was time to give up his attacking ambitions and hope for the best after 9.♗xf6 ♕a1+ 10.♘b1 gxf6 11.♕xe4. **9...♘bd7 10.c6** Strengthening Black's attack. **10...bxc6 11.♕xc6 ♗b7!** Elegant and killing. **12.♕xb7 ♕a1+ 13.♘b1 ♖b8** The point. **14.♕xb8+ ♘xb8 15.♗b5+ ♘fd7 16.♘e2 ♗e7 17.♗xe7 ♔xe7 18.♘d4 ♘c5 19.h4 ♖d8 20.♖h3**



White may have hoped to build some kind of fortress, or even embarrass the black queen, but no such thing happened.

**20...♘d3+! 21.♗xd3 ♖xd4 22.♗e2 ♖xd1+ 23.♗xd1 ♕a5 24.♘d2 f5 25.♖g3 ♕e5 26.♖a3 ♘c6 27.g3 ♕d4 28.♖e3 ♘b4** White resigned.

Instead of a postponed closing ceremony because of tiebreak games, there was an early press conference with a beaming Wesley So. Contrary to what some expected, he didn't begin by thanking the Lord. As he walked to the press room, he had quietly taken off the cross he had been wearing during the game and chose to keep his religious thoughts for a more private moment. Instead he said that he had been inspired by the presence of Anatoly Karpov, who had started the round by hitting the gong. So explained that there was no former champion from who he had learned more than Karpov and that he felt there was a similarity in their styles.

Obviously he was over the moon that he had won ahead of Magnus Carlsen, but he did not let himself be tempted to empty boasts. Carlsen remains the strongest player on the planet and there is still a considerable gap he has to cross to really challenge him.

Karpov had spoken similar words earlier in the afternoon. He expressed his belief that Carlsen would still be way ahead of all the others if he manages to return to the level he had two years ago. But to do so, he must first overcome his crisis.

What that crisis consists of, and how big it really is, is probably something only Magnus Carlsen knows. Is he simply paying the toll for the huge pressure he was under in New York, or is it more complicated? Wesley So is now in second place with a 2822 rating, only 16 points behind the world's number one. And three more 2800+ players, Caruana, Kramnik and Vachier-Lagrave, are not far behind. Magnus Carlsen never likes it if his rivals do well and he simply hates it when his own level doesn't meet his standards. No doubt he will have a serious talk with himself. 2017 should be an interesting year.

NOTES BY
**Wesley So**

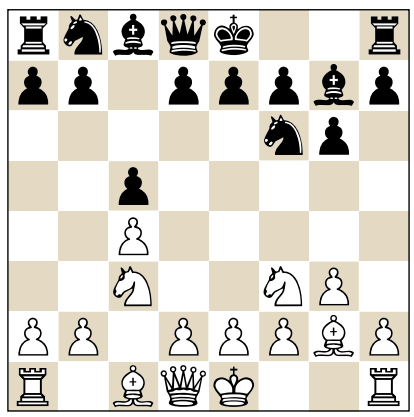
**Wesley So**
**Pentala Harikrishna**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (5)
English Opening, Symmetrical

Back from wonderful Wijk aan Zee and sitting at the kitchen table of our house, I am thinking it over. I played my first Wijk aan Zee tournament in 2009, in the Corus C-group. I was 16. I graduated to the B-group but never won it, probably because I spent too much time daydreaming, watching the line-up of A-players and wondering if I would ever make it to that elevated part of the stage. Well, finally I did. It took only six more tries and eight more years to get this beautiful crumpled steel trophy. Thank you, dear organizers, for believing in me in spite of some poor showings in past years. Thank you for continually inviting me back for another chance. And what a chance it was! A chance to shine in a tournament where Karpov hands out the top prize! I found out you can get so dizzy with excitement it's as if your feet don't touch the ground. Dear readers, never give up, amazing success might just be a few years around the corner.
It is not difficult to explain why Tata Steel Chess is so special. First, of course, is the long and prestigious history behind the event, its staff, its organization, its focus on making the event more than just about chess. We are taken to visit different cities, museums, schools, and this time even a soccer stadium and the Dutch Parliament. Then there is the village itself, where the friendly inhabitants go all out to support the chess event with decorations and chess imagery in all their streets, shops and restaurants. After I had won, they had an impromptu choir in the village square singing songs for me (where else in the world can that even happen???). My whole family loves this village. Even in January the beach is a fun place, with windsurfers, racing sulkies and people running with their dogs. And then there is the North Sea – very unlike the oceans I grew up with, which were soft and blue. The North Sea is different. It has an almost scary power and yet at night we fall cosily asleep to its sound.
But anyway, moving on, the following is a good example of how things went in my games here. A slow start, with lots of long thinks on both sides, followed by short tactical skirmishes as my opponent and I would make sure we safely made the time-control on move 40. Before this game I was on 3 out of 4, while Pentala had 2½. I was determined to try to seize the tournament initiative and make use of my white pieces before the rest day. I haven't played Pentala much recently and I was very curious how the game would go. He's had a wonderfully steady climb up the ranks and often came close to the World Top 10. I knew in my heart that this was going to be a very tough fight.

**1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6**

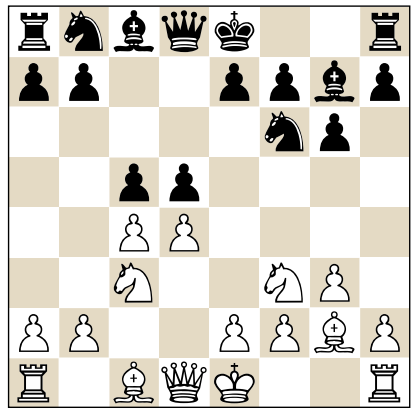
I had not expected him to go for a kingside fianchetto, but at the same time it's logical to copy your opponent's moves in slow openings, as it makes White wonder which of his plans he should attempt.

**3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.c4 c5 5.♘c3**



**5...d5** Finally, Black stopped copying my moves. I thought 5...0-0 was more accurate, but perhaps Pentala thought it would transpose.
5...0-0 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♕c7 has been played many times by Vachier-Lagrave. I think Black should be completely fine here after 8.b3 d5 9.♘db5 ♕a5.
Here I had a really long think (25 minutes). In the first few rounds of the tournament I was still finding my rhythm and making sure I avoided mistakes, which is why I spent a lot of time in the opening.

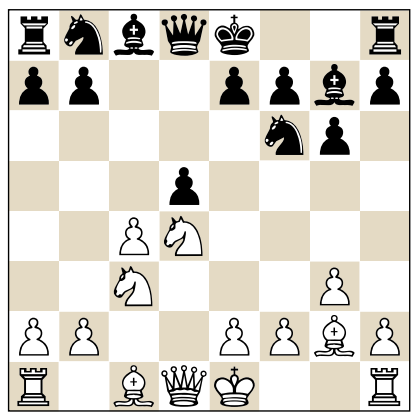
**6.d4**



**6...cxd4**

6...dxc4 7.♕a4+ ♘c6 8.dxc5 0-0 9.0-0 should be fine for White, and most likely gives a small edge.
But best for Black is 6...0-0, as I found after the game. There are some problems to solve, but he should be okay after some accurate moves: 7.dxc5 ♕a5 8.0-0 dxc4 9.♕d4 ♘c6 10.♕xc4 ♗e6, or 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.♗e3 cxd4 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♘xd4 ♕c4, in both cases with good counterplay.

**7.♘xd4**



**7...dxc4** Probably played with a sigh. And a relief for me, as now I can play with almost no risk.
The critical line 7...e5 8.♕a4+ required some calculation. In general I like White's position with

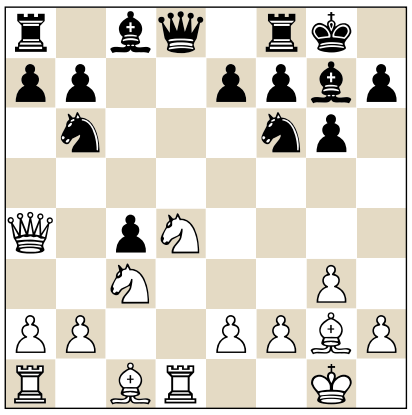
## ‘And what a chance it was! A chance to shine in a tournament where Karpov hands out the top prize!’

the powerful bishop on g2, but the computer calls it almost equal after 8...♗d7 9.♘db5 0-0 10.♗g5 (after 10.cxd5 a6 11.♕a3, 11...♘c6! was the move I missed while calculating 6.d4 !) 10...d4 11.♘d5 ♗c6 12.♕a3 ♗xd5 13.cxd5 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6, and Black should be alright. But I would have gone 6...0-0 if I had been Black.

**8.♕a4+**

I also thought about 8.♘db5 ♕xd1+ 9.♘xd1 ♘a6, but White cannot exploit the isolated knight on a6.

**8...♘bd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖d1! ♘b6**



**11.♕a3!**

A very important move! Without it Black makes more trades with ...♘b6-d5. And as we all know, the defender is helped by exchanging pieces! Later I learned that this exact position had been reached in a game of Vladimir Kramnik’s. I had a clear memory that this 11.♕a3, followed by 13.a4!, had been played before, but during the game I just couldn’t remember by whom! In my defence, though, the Kramnik game arose from a different move order, and although I had a strong feeling it felt like his game, I just wasn’t completely sure!

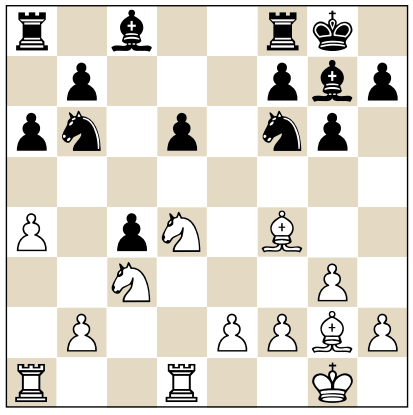
**11...♕d6**

Again, not an easy move to make, but perhaps there is not much choice. The pressure along the d-file and along the diagonals makes it very hard for Black to finish his development.

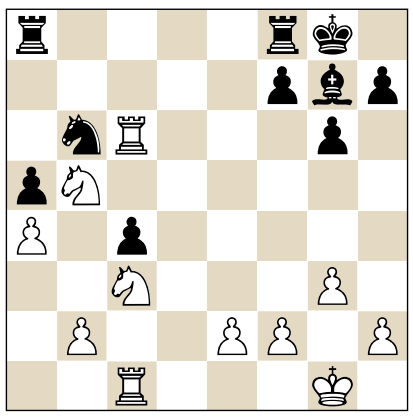
**12.♕xd6 exd6 13.a4!**

A very precise move, possibly missed by Pentala, because here he had another really long think. He used more than 30 minutes. In the final stages of the game we were both in time-trouble, which played a crucial role in the result.

**13...a6** 13...♘bd7 runs into 14.♗f4 ♘e8 15.♘db5. **14.♗f4**



**14...d5** The aforementioned Vladimir Kramnik game (against Nepomniachtchi, Dortmund 2015) went 14...♘e8 15.♖ac1 (just killing is 15.a5 ♘d7 16.♖a4 ♘e5 17.♘d5, and Black can hardly move. But 15.♖ac1 is good, too, and it gave me an idea for my own game) 15...a5 16.♘db5 ♗d7 17.♗xd6 ♘xd6 18.♖xd6 ♗c6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♖xc6.



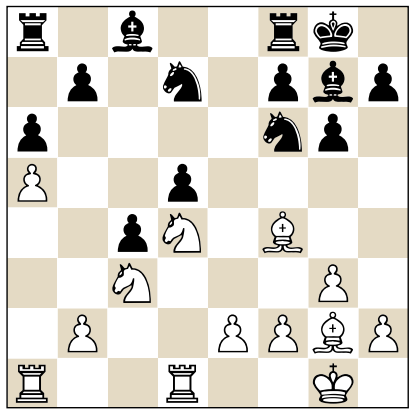
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White is just a pawn up and eventually converted it.

**15.a5**

Also very good was 15.♗d6 ♖e8 16.a5 ♘bd7 17.♗xd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♖e4 19.e3.

**15...♘bd7**

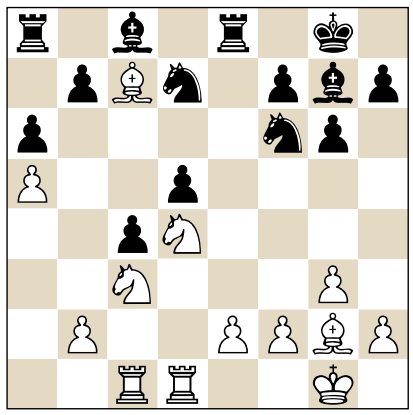


**16.♖ac1**

Too artistic. At the end of the day, a pawn is a pawn, and I should just start taking free ones when I can!

I am not sure why I didn’t just go for 16.♗xd5! ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♘e5 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.♔g2. White has very good winning chances. First of all, Black has to finish his development, although it’s not clear how his bishop on c8 can get out. And in the worst case White is going to be a clear pawn up.

**16...♖d8 17.♗c7 ♖e8**



**18.♗d6?!**

Stalling. I really wanted to prevent him from developing his pieces, but it’s impossible.

I should just have taken: 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♗xd5 ♘e5 20.♗xe5 ♖xe5 21.e4, again with good winning chances. It’s not as good as the variation 16.♗xd5 earlier, but still the most practical option.

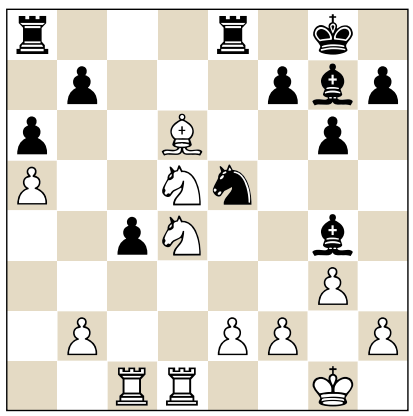
**18...♘e5**

Better was 18...♘f8! 19.♘a4 ♘8d7, with a white edge (19...♘e6 20.♘xe6

♗xe6 21.♘b6 ♖ad8 22.♗c7 wins an exchange).

**19.♗xd5 ♘xd5 20.♘xd5 ♗g4**

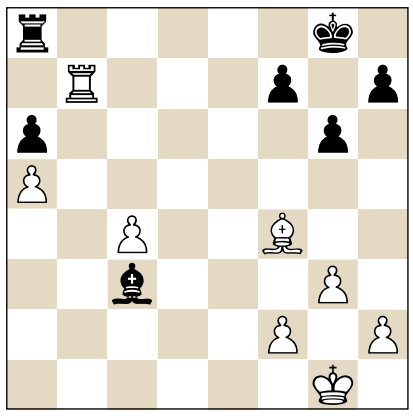
Played quickly. Here I trusted my opponent and assumed that Black would be fine in the forced variation after 21.♘c7.



**21.♖d2?**

I spent a lot of time looking at 21.♘c7, but in the end I decided that it wouldn't get me much, so I started looking for alternatives and came up with this one which, unfortunately, is at best second-rate.

So, best was 21.♘c7! ♘d3 22.exd3 ♗xd1 (22...♖ed8 23.♘xa8) 23.♖xd1 ♖ed8 (23...♗xd4 24.dxc4 ♗xb2 25.♖b1 does not change the evaluation) 24.♘xa8 ♗xd4 25.♗f4 ♖xa8 26.dxc4. In fact, I saw the position all the way to here, but what I didn't realize was that White is simply winning!: 26...♗xb2 27.♖b1 ♗c3 28.♖xb7, and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– after 28...♗xa5 I missed the very nice move 29.♗b8, when the c-pawn will cost Black his bishop.

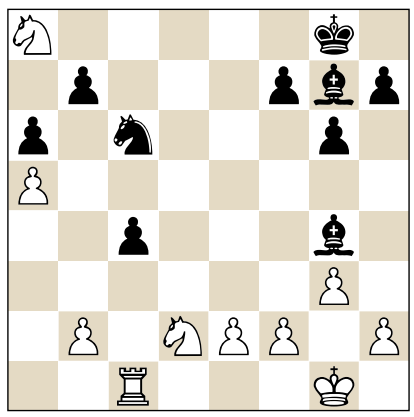
– 28...♖e8 29.♔g2 ♗xa5 30.c5 ♖c8 31.♗d6 looks like an easy technical win. The white king is just too quick: ♔f3-e4-d5.

**21...♖ed8**

Missing his best chance: 21...♖ad8 22.♘c7 ♖f8! 23.♗xf8 ♗xf8, and suddenly Black is completely fine. I think our time issue was really a big factor in this game.

**22.♘b6 ♖xd6** 22...♖a7 is definitely a bad place for a rook.

**23.♘xa8 ♘c6 24.♘f3 ♖xd2 25.♘xd2**



**25...♗xb2**

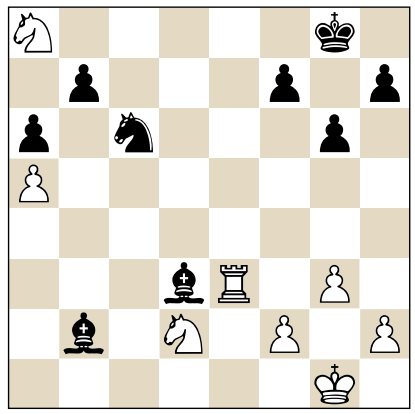
25...♗e6 is the computer move: 26.♖b1 (26.♘xc4 ♘d4 should be a draw) 26...f5 27.♘c7 ♗f7, and the position is not clear.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

**Look, it's mine! Wesley So proudly holds the Tata Steel trophy, as his mother and manager Lotis Key and his sister Abbey share in his happiness.**

**26.♖xc4 ♗xe2 27.♖e4 ♗d3 28.♖e3**

After having done just enough to keep the game going, Pentala suddenly made a big mistake.



**28...♘b4?** A terrible blunder due to time-trouble.

It should probably just end in a draw after 28...♘e5 29.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 30.♖xf3 ♗b5 31.♘c7 ♗c6 32.♖e3. Black's bishop pair is really powerful and it's hard to defend my a5-pawn.

**29.♘b6**

Bringing back all the forces into play! Here I think Pentala realized his mistake, but it's too late now.

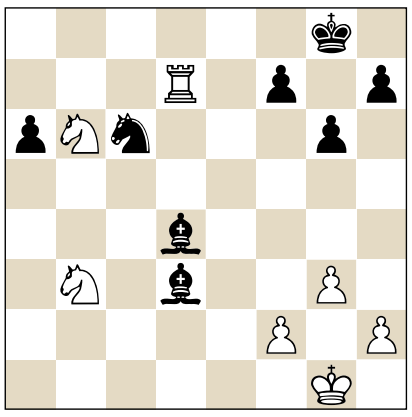
29.♘c7 was just as good. White

threatens 30.♘d5, and it's not possible for Black to defend the b7-pawn: 29...♗d4 30.♖e8+ ♔g7 31.♘b3, winning.

**29...♗d4** White is also winning after 29...♗c1 30.♖e8+ ♔g7 31.♘dc4.

**30.♖e7 ♘c6 31.♖xb7 ♘xa5 32.♖d7 ♘c6 33.♘b3**

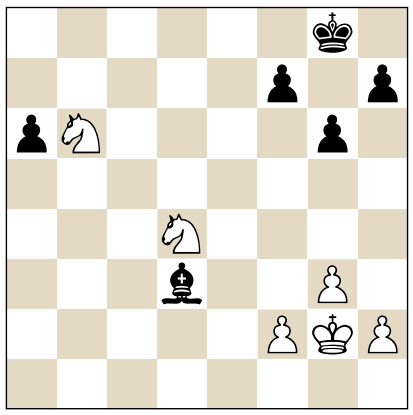
It's hard to choose between my move and 33.♘f3 ♗xb6 34.♖xd3. The point is that my knight has a chance to attack his kingside pawns with ♘g5 later.



**33...♗f5** This really surprised me, as he chooses to be down a piece instead of an exchange. He probably considered his position to be technically lost anyway and decided to take a different path.

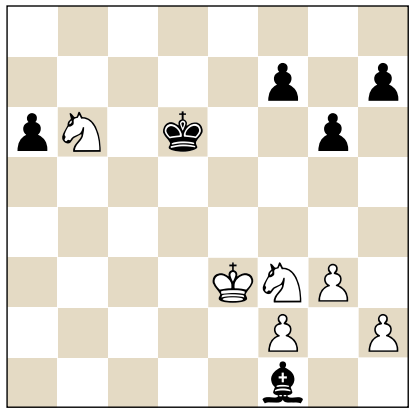
33...♗xb6 34.♖xd3 would make me work for the win, but in the long run White should prevail. For example: 34...♘b4 35.♖d6 ♗c7 36.♖d4 a5 37.♖d7 ♗b6 38.♖b7 ♘d5 39.♘xa5 ♗xa5 40.♖b5 ♗c3 41.♖xd5 f5. After the game I asked him what he thought about this endgame and he considered it to be lost. White can infiltrate with his king and he has enough pawns to make progress and avoid any types of fortress.

**34.♖xd4 ♘xd4 35.♘xd4 ♗d3 36.♔g2**



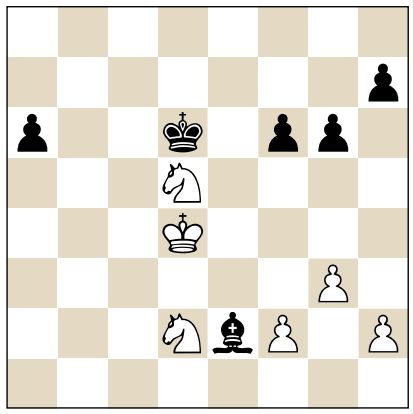
The game is over. The white knights just control too many key squares.

**36...♔f8 37.♔f3 ♔e7 38.♔e3 ♗f1 39.♘f3 ♔d6**



**40.♔d4!** Centralization is the key to success! **40...f6** 40...♔c6 is met by 41.♘d5, and wins.

**41.♘d2 ♗e2 42.♘d5**



**42...f5** Or 42...a5 43.♘xf6 a4 44.♘fe4+ ♔c6 45.♘c3 a3 46.♘xe2 a2 47.♘b3, winning. **43.♘c3 ♗h5 44.♘c4+ ♔e6** 44...♔c6 45.f4, and wins. **45.f4** Preventing any kingside counterplay. **45...♔d7 46.♔c5 h6 47.♘d5 ♔e6 48.♘c7+**

Black resigned.

A pleasing victory and very important for the tournament standings. After this I was on +3 and in the lead. I must say about my opponent that he is a gentleman, always courteous even in disappointment. It is a pleasure to see him at any tournament and clearly his talent is one that cannot be taken lightly.

Let me end this annotation by thanking all my opponents for their generosity in my eventual triumph. I am fortunate to work with them. Will such a moment ever come to me again? I hope so, but who knows what tomorrow will bring? Thankfully, this moment is big enough to treasure for a long, long time.

WESLEY'S WINS KEEP AMAZING THE FOLKS BACK HOME
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE SO-CALLED CHESSMASTER WHO WON THAT GREAT TOURNEY?
#ME
IN SWEDEN?
VONK

BEREND VONK

NOTES BY
**Anish Giri**

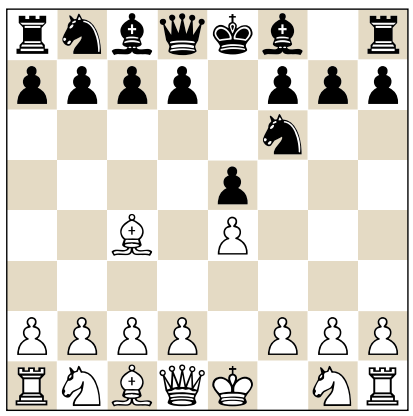
**Magnus Carlsen**
**Wei Yi**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (4)
Bishop's Opening

It seemed that Carlsen had finally figured out how to play against the boy who is often called the next Carlsen, the Chinese prodigy Wei Yi.

**1.e4 e5 2.♗c4**

The Bishop's Opening is most likely an attempt to reach the Italian by avoiding the Petroff (2.♘f3 ♘f6). It can also lead to the Vienna Game and, God forbid, the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation.

**2...♘f6**



**3.d3** For those who didn't already know, 3.♘c3 ♘xe4 4.♕h5 ♘d6 5.♗b3 ♘c6 6.♘b5 g6 7.♕f3 f5 8.♕d5 ♕e7 (or ...♕f6) 9.♘xc7+ ♔d8 10.♘xa8 is the Frankenstein-Dracula.

**3...c6**

The most principled system, and the one I also played back in my Petroff days.

**4.♘f3 d6**

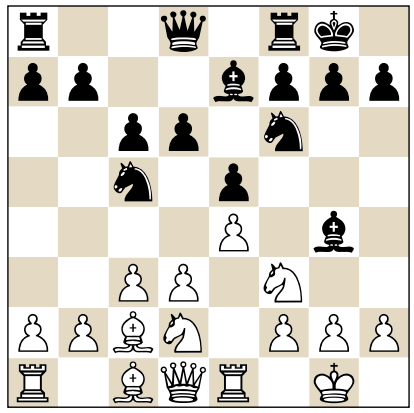
This looks too passive to my taste, but there was at least some point in Black's move order. 3...d6 or 3...♗e7 would maybe allow 4.f4!?.

4...d5 requires some knowledge, but I guess Wei Yi either didn't know the lines there or had forgotten them.

**5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♗b3**

Another typical way to play is a4 or a3, preparing ♗a2.

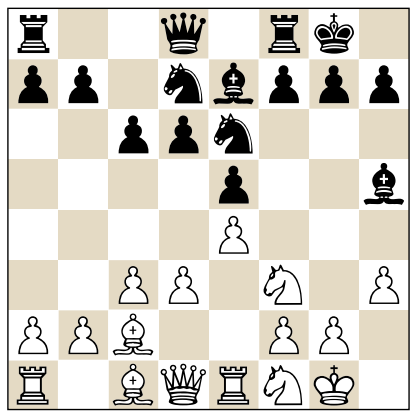
**6...0-0 7.c3 ♘bd7 8.♖e1 ♘c5 9.♗c2 ♗g4 10.♘bd2**



**10...♘e6!?**

I have seen this manoeuvre before in some d3 Spanish games, although there is usually one knight on c6 and it is the f6-knight that completes the journey ...f6-d7-c5-e6. Black can always do something like this, but it does not always yield him full equality. Here it actually seems pretty decent.

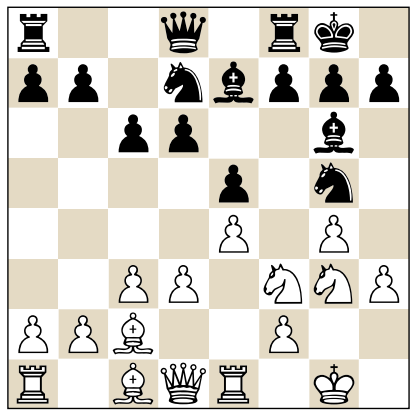
**11.h3 ♗h5 12.♘f1 ♘d7**



**13.g4** The most principled reaction. You can always count on Magnus in such cases.

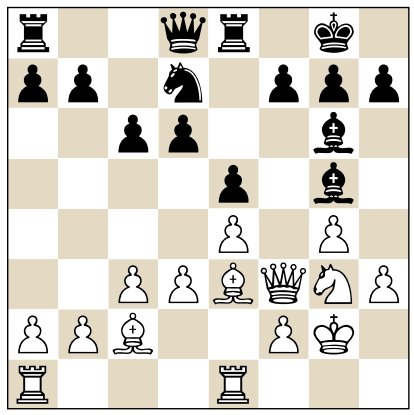
The standard reaction is 13.♘g3 ♗xf3 (13...♗g6 is probably too much. White hasn't even weakened the kingside with g4) 14.♕xf3 g6, followed by ...♗g5.

**13...♗g6 14.♘g3 ♘g5**



**15.♗xg5!?** This decision puzzled and almost shocked me when I first saw it, but while I kept walking around the playing hall, I started appreciating it. It is a pity to part with the bishop, but trading two pairs of minor pieces would give Black a much easier life.

15.♔g2 is the obvious move: 15...♘xf3 16.♕xf3 ♖e8 17.♗e3 ♗g5,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

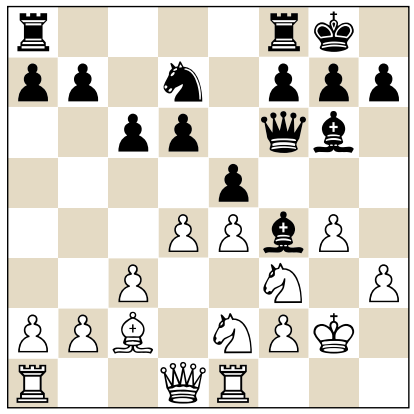
and Black is pretty solid. If need be, he can play ...f6 to bring the bishop back. Still, I think this is not all that harmless either. The bishop on g6 is still stuck for now.

As Magnus mentioned, 15.♘f5 is met solidly by 15...♗xf5! 16.gxf5, and now simply 16...♘xf3+! 17.♕xf3 ♗g5.

**15...♗xg5 16.d4 ♗f4**

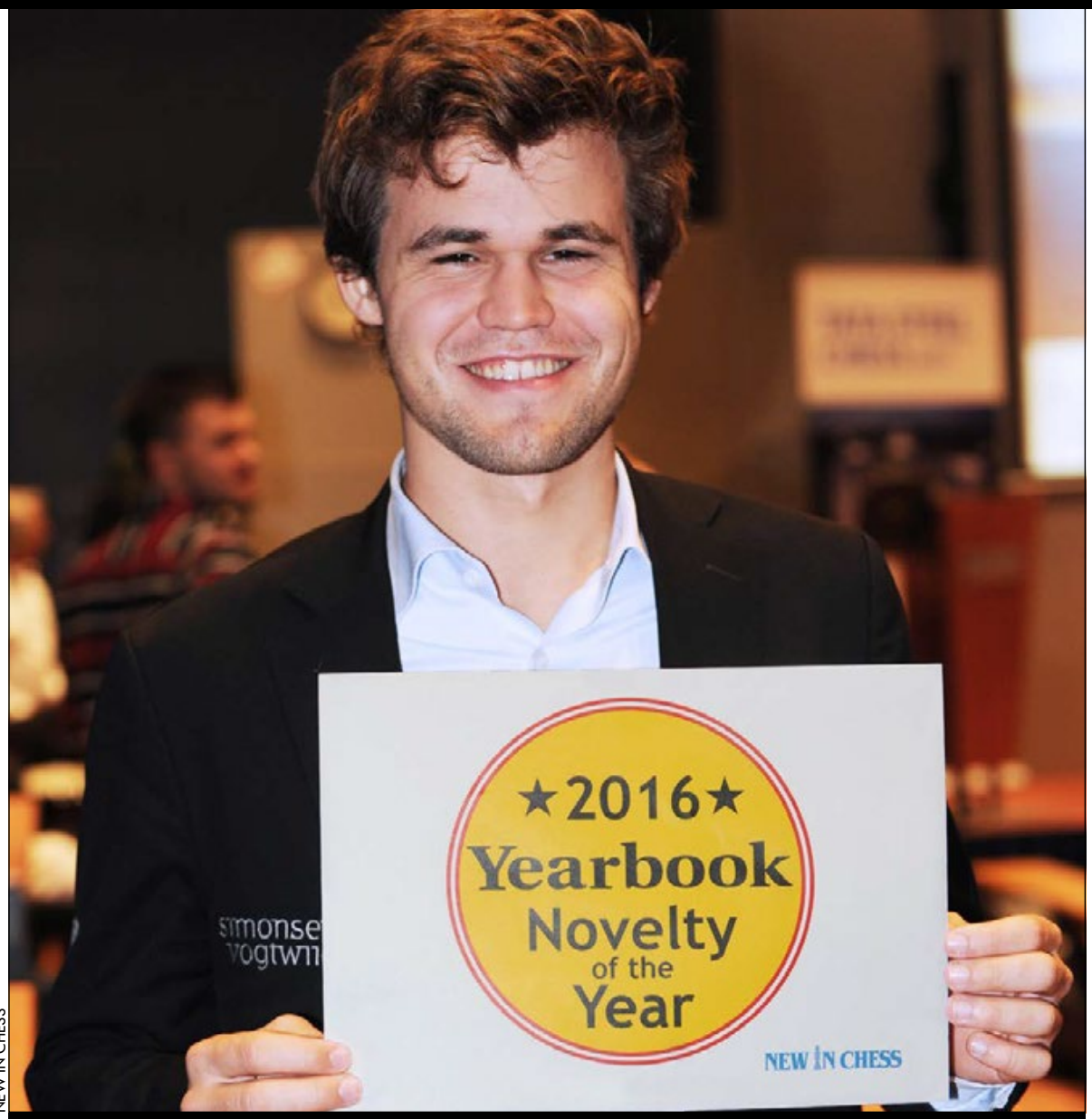
Wei Yi wants to trade this pair of pieces badly, and why not!

**17.♘e2 ♕f6 18.♔g2**



**18...exd4?!** I don't see why Wei Yi decided to give up the centre.

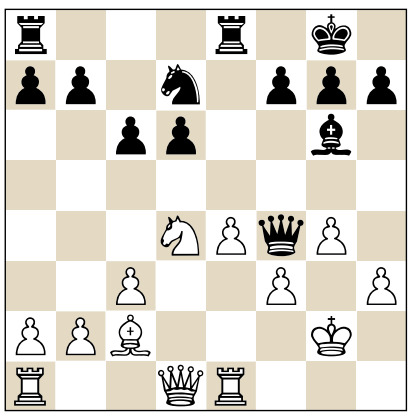
18...♖fe8 would have been my choice: 19.♘xf4 (19.dxe5 can't be the move that scared him, as 19...♘xe5 20.♘xf4 ♕xf4 is a much better version) 19...♕xf4 20.♕d2 ♕xd2 21.♘xd2 exd4 22.cxd4 d5! looks equal to me.




NEW IN CHESS

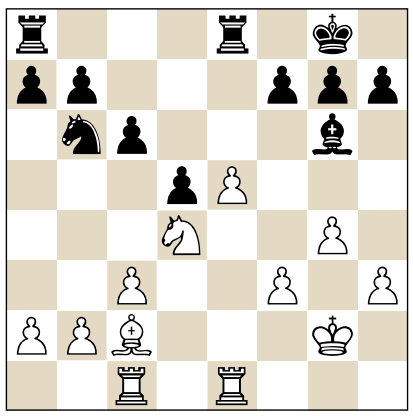
**Probably it was poor comfort, but at the end of the prize-giving Magnus Carlsen managed a big smile as he accepted the 2016 Yearbook Novelty of the Year prize for his move 12.♘e2 against Kramnik in Stavanger. As the move was found by his second Jon Ludvig Hammer, he asked us to send the money, 350 euros, to him.**

**19.♘fxd4 ♖fe8 20.♘xf4 ♕xf4 21.f3** White is now threatening ♖c1, with some serious potential to start the kingside pawns rolling. It was probably time to panic and try 21...d5!?.



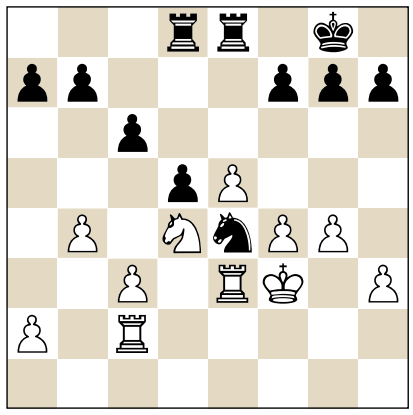
**21...♘b6?!** The concrete solution, or at least an attempt at a solution, 21...d5!?, would actually be very much in Wei Yi's direct style. I guess he underestimated the danger in the endgame that he went for. Play could continue: 22.exd5 ♖xe1 23.♕xe1 ♗xc2 24.♘xc2 ♘e5! 25.♕e3 ♘g6! 26.♖e1, and White retains some small pressure, considering that 26...♕b8! is unlikely to happen in a human game.

**22.♕c1 ♕xc1 23.♖axc1 d5 24.e5**



Too natural to put an exclam to this move. White's kingside pawns are going to steamroll up the board.

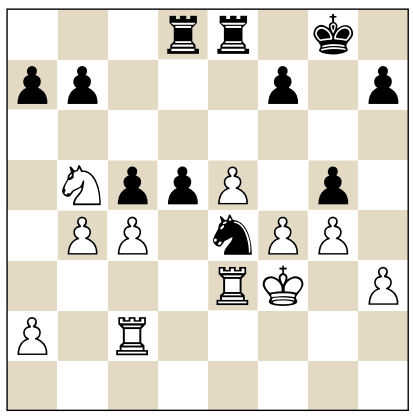
**24...♘d7 25.f4 ♗xc2 26.♖xc2 ♘c5 27.♖e3 ♖ad8 28.♔f3 ♘e4 29.b4**



**29...g5?** This only backfires. White would be better after 29...f6 30.exf6!? ♘xf6 31.♘e6, but the game is not over!

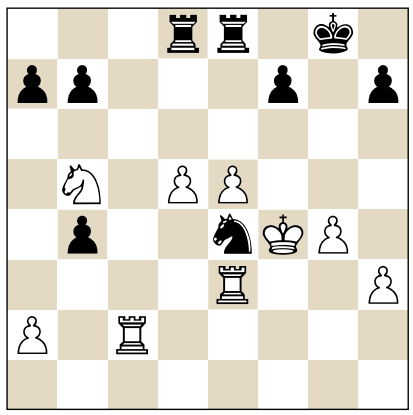
**30.c4! c5?** This won't work. But 30...gxf4 31.♔xf4 brings no salvation either. The knight on e4 is useless, while its white counterpart is going to take a nice trip, starting with ♘f5.

**31.♘b5!**



Now the e4-knight not only has no squares; it also loses its only support.

**31...gxf4 32.♔xf4 cxb4 33.cxd5**



Lights out! Black resigned, as 33...♘c3 34.♘xc3 bxc3 35.♔e4 is too painful!

NOTES BY
**Adhiban Baskaran**

**Adhiban Baskaran**
**Ian Nepomniachtchi**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (10)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

This game was played in the beautiful Philharmonie theatre in Haarlem, as part of the 'Chess on Tour' initiative. I was really looking forward to it, since I had begun my fantastic run on the first 'Chess on Tour' day in Rotterdam!

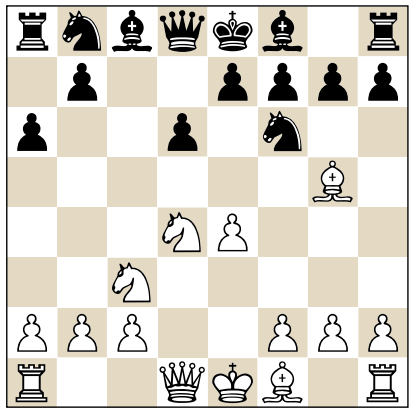
**1.e4!?**

After surviving a lost position in my previous game against Wei Yi, I was eager to get back my momentum with a win.

**1...c5**

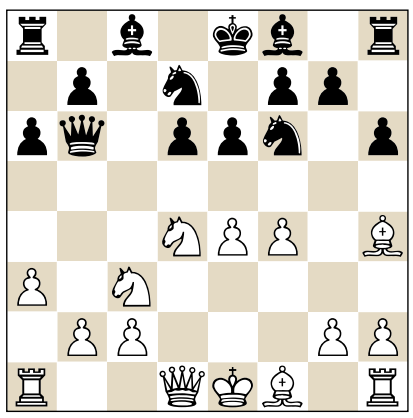
This is just asking for trouble ☺.

**2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5**



Already a huge surprise to play the main lines, since I was playing a lot of 'coffeehouse chess', as everyone put it.

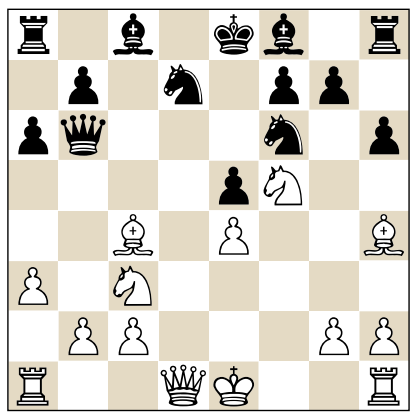
**6...e6 7.f4 h6 8.♗h4 ♕b6 9.a3 ♘bd7**



**10.♗c4** In Round 3, my opponent faced 10.♗e2 e5 11.♘f5 g6 12.♗f2 ♘c5 13.b4, and Black was in big trouble in Wei Yi-Nepomniachtchi.

**10...e5** Apparently, this is what Nepo was intending to go in his game against Wei Yi, but there he messed up the move order.

**11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♘f5**

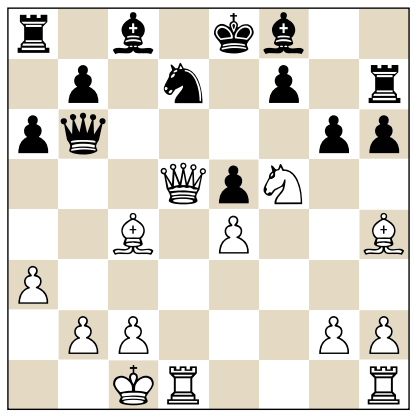


Starting a forced sequence of moves.

**12...g6**

12...♕c6 is met by the simple 13.♗a2, with a clear advantage.

**13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♖h7 15.0-0-0!?**

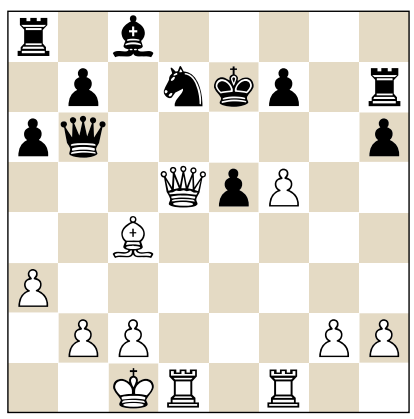


White is forced to sacrifice the piece to continue the fight for the initiative.

**15...gxf5 16.exf5 ♗e7**

After 16...f6 White goes 17.♗e2! h5 18.♕g8, with a strong attack.

**17.♗xe7 ♔xe7 18.♖hf1!?**

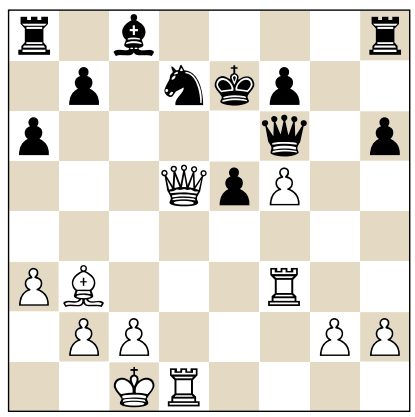


**18...♕f6** Preventing f6. Strongest was 18...♔f8!? 19.f6 ♘xf6 20.♕xe5 ♘g4 21.♕h5 ♗e6, with full equality. After 18...♕c7 19.♖de1 ♔f8 20.f6 White has strong compensation for the piece.

**19.♗b3!**

Creating all kinds of threats like ♗a4, ♖f3-c3, etc.

**19...♖h8 20.♖f3**



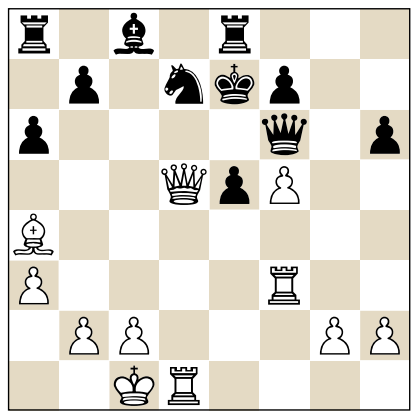
**20...♖e8?!**

A huge slip, but unfortunately I didn't find the refutation.

After 20...♖d8 there is the strong 21.♔b1!. The Comp likes White's position a lot, but in a practical game things are never that easy.

**21.♗a4**

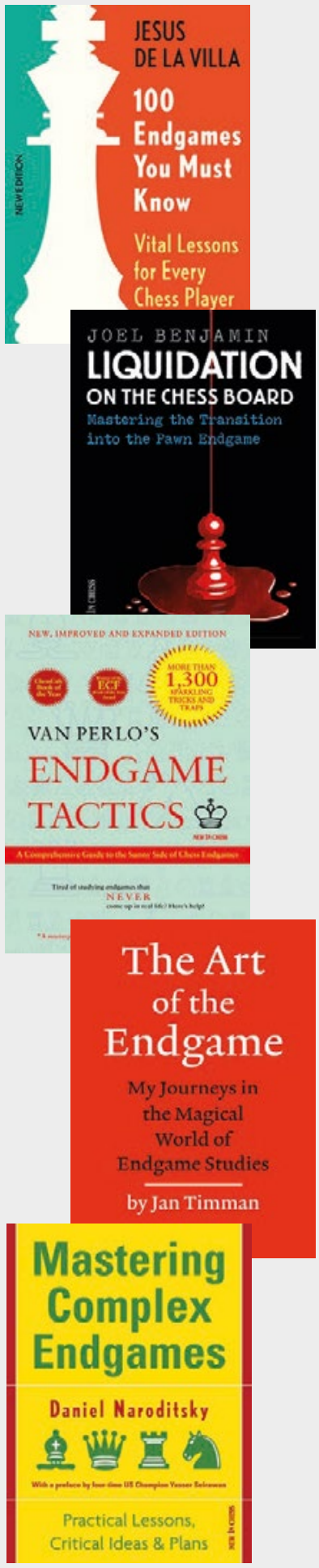
It was pity that I missed 21.♕c4! a5 (after 21...♔f8, 22.♖d6! is the stunning refutation, winning on the spot!). I stopped here, but after 22.♗a4! ♖a6 23.♖fd3 I get back the piece with a superior position.



**21...♖d8**

Nepo's original intention was 21...♔f8, but after 22.♗xd7 ♗xd7 23.♕c5+! ♕e7 there is 24.♕e3!. A cunning retreat. The black pieces are overloaded.

## Any plans to work on your endgame?

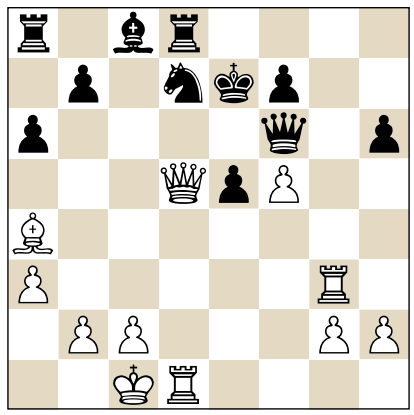

JESUS DE LA VILLA
100 Endgames You Must Know
Vital Lessons for Every Chess Player
JOEL BENJAMIN
LIQUIDATION ON THE CHESS BOARD
Mastering the Transition into the Pawn Endgame
NEW, IMPROVED AND EXPANDED EDITION
MORE THAN 1,300 SPARKLING TRICKS AND TRAPS
VAN PERLO'S ENDGAME TACTICS
The Art of the Endgame
My Journeys in the Magical World of Endgame Studies
by Jan Timman
Mastering Complex Endgames
Daniel Naroditsky
Practical Lessons, Critical Ideas & Plans

**New In Chess endgame books cover every inch of the road!**


**22.♖g3!?**

Preparing the nasty 23.♗xd7, followed by 24.♕c5+.

After the immediate 22.♗xd7 ♖xd7 23.♕c5+ ♔e8 24.♖xd7 ♔xd7 White doesn't have much firepower left.



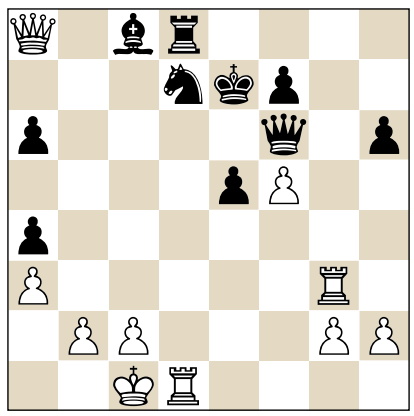
**22...b5**

A bit desperate.

Black had a cunning retort with 22...♖a7!, a stunning defence which both of us had overlooked: 23.♕d2 (23.♗xd7 b6!, winning back the piece) 23...b6 24.♔b1 ♖c7 25.♖d3 ♔f8 26.♕b4+, with sufficient compensation to hold the balance.

After 22...♔f8 I had intended 23.♕c4! (if only I had come across this idea on the 21st move!) 23...a5 24.♗xd7 ♖xd7 (24...b6 25.♕c6, with an extra pawn) 25.♖xd7 ♗xd7 26.♕c5+, winning.

**23.♕xa8 bxa4**



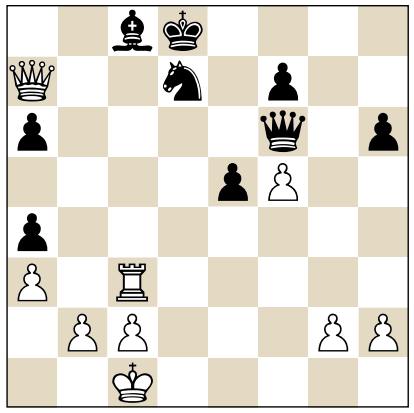
**24.♖c3**

After 24.♕d5! I would have had clear domination and a winning advantage.

**24...♘b6 25.♕a7+**

Another possibility was 25.♖c7+!? ♗d7 26.♕xa6, with good winning chances.

**25...♖d7 26.♖c7 ♔d8 27.♖dxd7+ ♘xd7 28.♖c3**



**28...♕d6!**

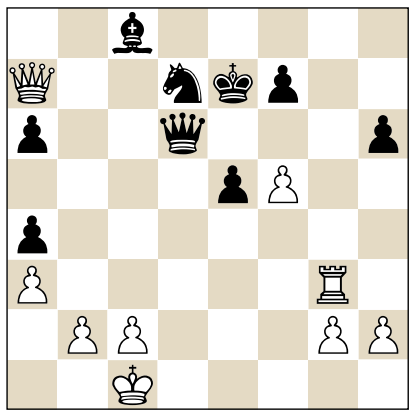
Hopeless was 28...♕b6 29.♕xb6+ ♘xb6 30.♖c6, winning the h6-pawn without having to give up the f5-pawn.

**29.♖g3**

Trying to break through Black's defences via the 8th rank.

**29...♔e7**

Nepo was angry about missing 29...♕c6, which I had intended to meet with 30.f6 (I had to play 30.♖d3, still with some practical chances) 30...♗b7!, and I am really angry about missing this.



**30.♖d3!**

This took Nepo by surprise. I really liked the fact that I had managed to provoke ...♔e7, since now the c8-bishop comes under fire.

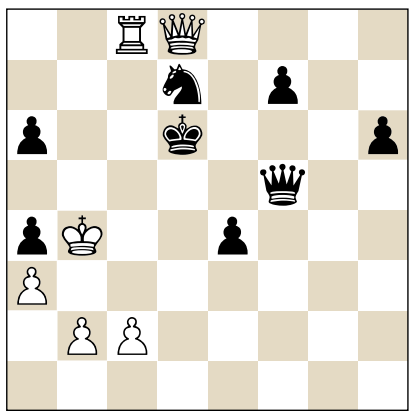
**30...♕c6 31.♖c3 ♕xg2!?**

Changing the character of the game.

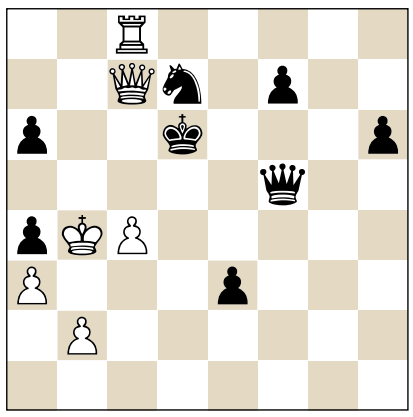
After 31...♕b7 32.♕e3! the h6-pawn will fall, and after 32...h5 33.♔b1 Black's pieces will be stuck and uncoordinated.

**32.♖xc8 ♕h1+ 33.♔d2 ♕xh2+ 34.♔c3 ♕h3+ 35.♔b4 ♕xf5 36.♕c7**

I wanted to go for the king, but here it wasn't the best option.
Best was 36.♕xa6. Always be greedy, guys ☺.
**36...e4 37.♕d8+ ♔d6**



**38.♕c7+**
After 38.♖c4! the attack comes from all fronts! This would have been a nice way to finish off the game!
**38...♔e7 39.c4 e3**
I realized that I didn't have many chances left and that the e-pawn was becoming a force to be reckoned with!
**40.♕d8+**
40.c5 was my original intention, but then Black has the calm 40...♕d5, controlling all the key squares.
**40...♔d6**

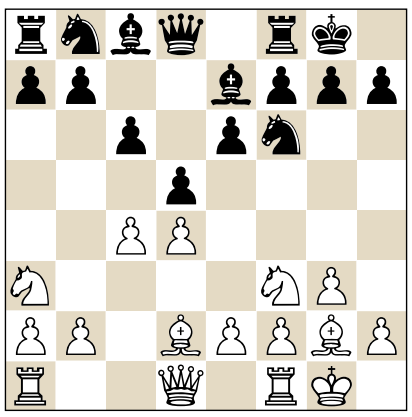


**41.♕c7+** Time to call it a day!
After 41.c5+ ♔e5 42.♕c7+ ♔e4, it was no longer clear who was playing for a win, since the knight was going to come to the commanding e5-square.
**41...♔e7 42.♕d8+ ♔d6**
Draw.
I missed couple of chances, but at least the quality of the game was decent (at least I prefer to think so ☺)!

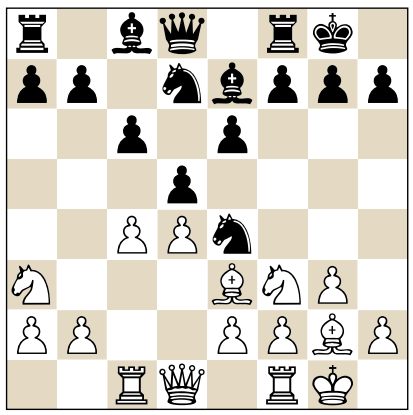
NOTES BY
## Levon Aronian

**Levon Aronian**
**Anish Giri**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (8)
Bogo-Indian Defence

**1.d4**
In the round before this game I played abysmally against Karjakin and was defeated, while Giri, displaying his fakir-like qualities, made a draw with Carlsen.
**1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3**
It was a long time since I had employed the Catalan Opening in tournament games, and before the round I thought that it would not be bad to begin the year by adopting something old.
**4...♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7**
In chess it is often possible to find beauty in things to which we are already accustomed. I can imagine the feeling of satisfaction experienced by the player who was the first to realize that in this position the bishop developed on d2 stands worse than on its initial square.
**6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 c6**
In the second round Wei Yi played 7...♘bd7 against me, which after 8.a4 a5 9.♕c2 c6 10.♖c1 led to a strange position of the Closed Catalan. In both games I endeavoured to take the play along Stonewall lines – but after trying to prevent Black from developing his bishop at b7.
**8.♘a3**

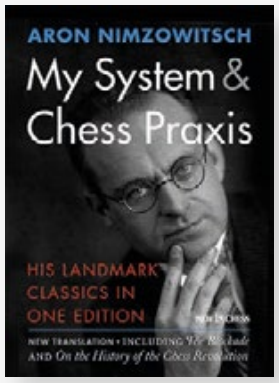


Last year I showed this new idea to my friend Boris Gelfand when he was visiting me in San Sebastian. As far as I recall, the master of opening discoveries did not display any great enthusiasm for my quirky idea. And indeed, White develops his knight on a square from which it has no prospects, apart from returning back and switching to squares (d2 or c3) where it would at least have some influence. At the same time, by transforming his steed into an ass, White solves a couple of global problems. Thanks to the rapid development of the rook on c1, the c4-pawn ceases to require constant defence, and the development of the bishop on b7 involves concrete play, which in the variations with 8.♕c2 or 8.♗f4 occurs more rarely. Despite its triumphal beginning, the true worth of the move 8.♘a3 can be disclosed only by future games.
**8...♘bd7**
A standard move, but not the most principled. I mainly studied the positions after 8...b6, when the play becomes very tempo-oriented. It is curious that Black also has the reasonable move 8...♘a6, with the idea after 9.♖c1 ♘e4 of preparing ♘b4.
**9.♖c1 ♘e4**
9...b6 was still possible, but less logical than on the previous move.
**10.♗e3**



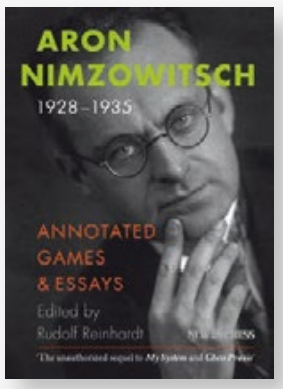
Black deploys his pieces with the plan of ...f5, and for this reason it would be stupid to place the bishop on f4, helping him to play the typical ...g5 with gain of tempo. In this set-up it is anti-positional to give up the dark-squared bishop for a knight, and

# SAVE 10%
ON
# THE COMPLETE NIMZOWITSCH




"This brand new edition represents excellent value for money as Nimzowitsch's other classic work, Chess Praxis, is included along with a couple of essays."
***Gary Lane, English Chess Federation Newsletter***

"Robert Sherwood has finally succeeded in rendering Nimzowitsch faithfully, something earlier translations have failed to do. His translation is fluent, engaging and a pleasure to read."
***John Watson, author of 'Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy'***




"If Nimzowitsch had published an additional third part of his two-volume 'System' series, he would definitely have used a large part of the material that is collected in this book."
***Peter Anderberg, Schach Magazine***

"A must for every fan of the great teacher of the Hypermodern."
***KARL Magazine***

"A bonanza of fresh Nimzowitsch material."
***Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine***

**The Complete Nimzowitsch, 2 books, 992 pages for only €54.95** (from €61.90)

**available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com**


**'As far as I recall, the master of opening discoveries did not display any great enthusiasm for my quirky idea.'**

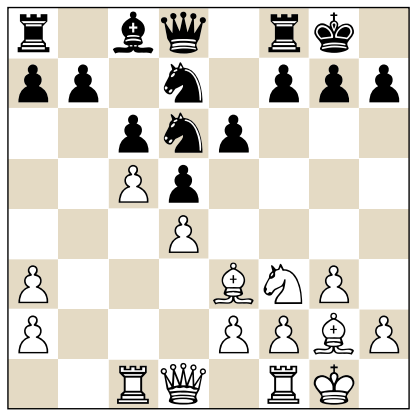
hiding the bishop on e1 is passive. Let it stand on e3 and await the call of fate, I thought.

**10...♗xa3**

An unfortunate decision. The natural 10...f5 would have led to a slow manoeuvring game. To exchange a good bishop for a passive piece, leaving himself with a bishop on c8, is excessively original and, as often happens, it is refuted in the most natural way.

**11.bxa3 ♘d6 12.c5**

It was not my intention to free the c8-bishop after 12.cxd5 exd5 or allow the exchange of the e3-bishop after 12.♘d2 ♘f5.



**12...♘c4**

Black is obliged to follow the plan begun with 10...♗xa3. After 12...♘f5 13.♗f4 White has a big advantage, since it is not possible to develop the queenside and especially the c8-bishop without losing material.

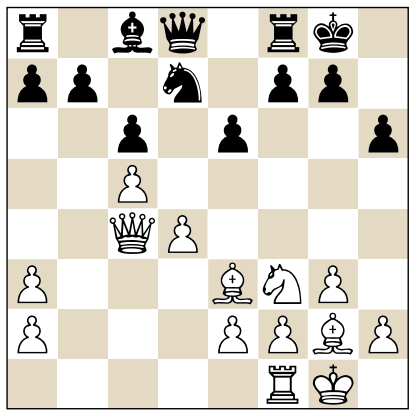
**13.♖xc4** The simplest. After seeing that after 14.♕c2 it was very difficult for Black to develop, I decided not to consider a worthy alternative in the form of 13.♗f4.

**13...dxc4 14.♕c2**

With this move White gains a tempo, since Black cannot ignore the threat of ♘g5, causing disharmony in his position by forcing him either to weaken his king by g6, or place his knight on f6, when he has to forget about the freeing move ...e5.

**14...h6 15.♕xc4**

It was possible to place the knight on d6 by 15.♘d2, but after obtaining such a splendid position I decided to play quickly and without subtleties.



**15...b6** The decisive mistake. Black should not have allowed the switching of the bishop to d6.

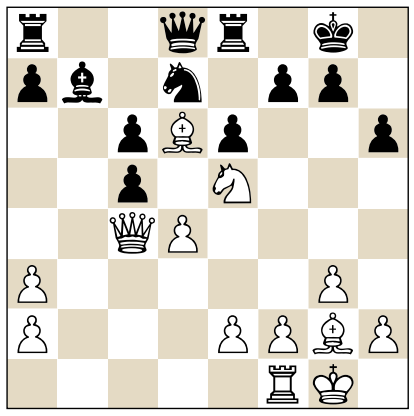
The only possibility of staying in the game was 15...e5, after which 16.dxe5 ♕e7 17.♕c3 ♖e8 18.♖d1 looks good, with advantage to White.

**16.♗f4** The bishop on d6 will be worth at least a rook and a pawn.

**16...♖e8 17.♗d6 ♗b7 18.♘e5**

After the exchange of knights Black is deprived of any hopes of activity, and he begins to have problems with the defence of his king.

**18...bxc5** After 18...♘xe5 19.dxe5 the plan of attack with ♗e4 and f4-f5 is hard to counter.



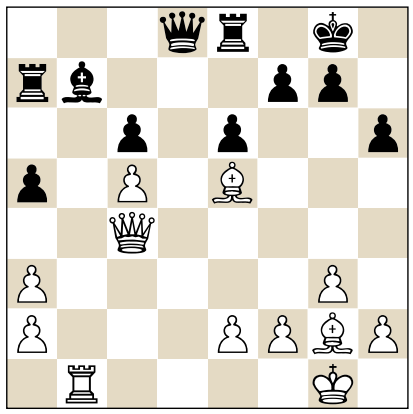
**19.dxc5** I was not tempted into winning material after 19.♘xd7 cxd4 20.♘c5 ♕xd6 21.♘xb7, since this would have given my opponent hopes of activity.

**19...♘xe5 20.♗xe5**

The opening of lines adds to Black's problems. The weak pawn on c6 and the possible weakness of his king leave him no time to activate the b7-bishop.

**20...a5 21.♖b1 ♖a7**

After 21...♗a6 22.♕c2 ♕d7 23.a4 the illusory freedom of the light-square bishop is clearly apparent.



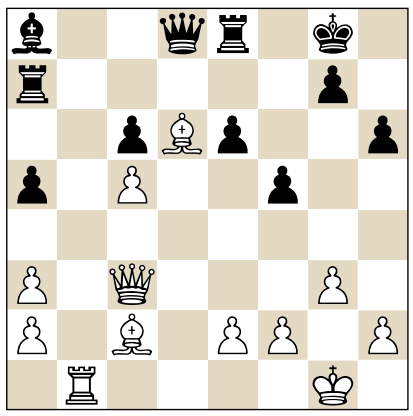
**22.♕c3** The simplest. Because of Black's weakened king it will be difficult for him to mobilize his pieces.

**22...f6 23.♗d6 ♗a8 24.♗e4**

As one of the classics wrote: 'with the unavoidable strengthening of the position'.

**24...f5 25.♗c2**

Preparing e4, opening the diagonal for the bishop on c2.



**25...♖b7** After 25...♖d7 I calculated the forcing variation 26.♖b8 ♕xb8 27.♗xb8 ♖xb8 28.♕e5 ♖e8 29.♗xf5 ♖d5 30.♗xe6+ ♔h8 31.♕c7 with a quick win.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

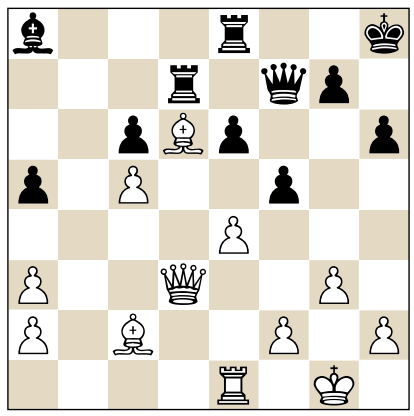
**Anish Giri stops the clock after a game of suffering. With a textbook example of an exchange sacrifice, Levon Aronian got an overwhelming position that the Armenian duly converted.**

**26.♖d1** The rook will come in useful in the attack.

**26...♖d7 27.e4 ♕f6 28.♕c4**

I did not rush to win material, but decided first to slightly maintain the tension.

**28...♔h8 29.♖e1 ♕f7 30.♕d3**



**30...f4**

Tired of suffering, Anish tries to muddy the waters. I suspect that masters of creating fortresses would have played 30...♖dd8 with an imperturbable appearance and awaited actions on the part of White.

**31.gxf4 e5 32.♕h3**

One of the safest ways. Because of the hanging position of the rook on d7, Black suffers loss of material.

**32...♖xd6**

32...exf4 33.e5 was equally dismal.

**33.cxd6 ♕g6+**

33...♕f4 was marginally more resilient.

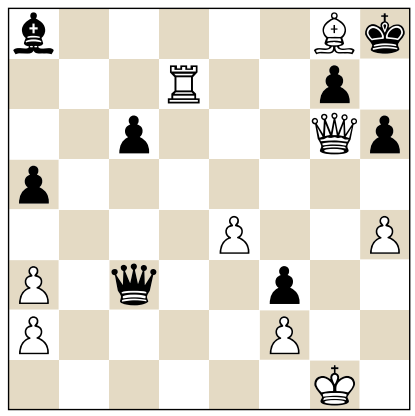
**34.♕g3 ♕xd6 35.♖d1**

Since the endgame after 35...exf4 is hopeless, the e5-pawn cannot be held.

**35...♕c5**

This hastens the end.

**36.♖d7 ♖g8 37.♗b3 exf4 38.♕g6 f3 39.h4 ♕c3 40.♗xg8**



It is always pleasant to take the king for a walk surrounded by his friends.

**40...♕e1+ 41.♔h2 ♕xf2+ 42.♔h3 ♕f1+ 43.♔g4**

Black resigned.

NOTES BY
**Wei Yi**

**Richard Rapport**
**Wei Yi**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (6)
Petroff Defence, Paulsen Variation

This was my third time in Wijk aan Zee. Last year I finished 7th in the Masters, so I was hoping for a breakthrough this time.

My opponent in Round 6 was Hungarian prodigy Richard Rapport. Recently we played a match in my hometown of Yancheng, where he beat me in the tiebreaks. This time I wanted to do better...

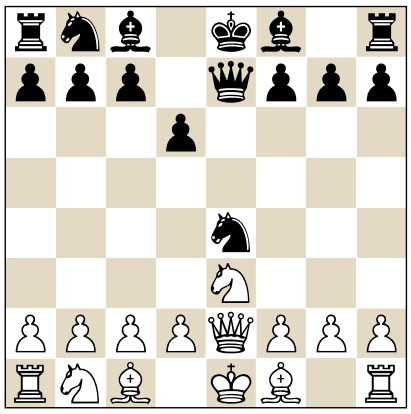
**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6**

The Petroff Defence. That doesn't seem like the most exciting choice, but I guessed he might come up with some surprise in this 'boring' opening.

**3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘c4!? ♘xe4 5.♕e2**

As expected, he chose a rare but dangerous line, that forced me to think hard.

**5...♕e7 6.♘e3**



**6...♗e6** Played after a long think. Black has many choices here. Both 6...♘f6 and 6...c6 look natural as well. For example: 6...♘c6 7.♘d5 ♘d4 8.♘xe7 ♘xe2 9.♘d5 ♘d4, when 10.♗d3 will be met by 10...♘c5. Instead of 7.♘d5, White can also play 7.♘c3.

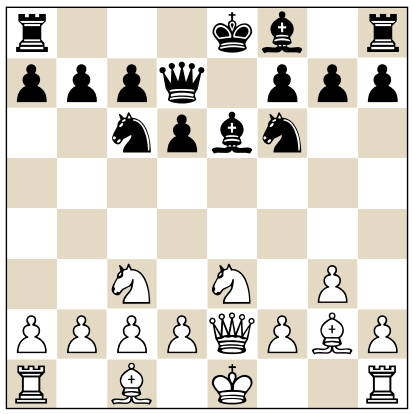
**7.♘c3**

After 7.g3 ♘c6 8.♗g2 d5 Black is fine.

**7...♘f6** I don't like the position arising after 7...♘xc3 8.bxc3.

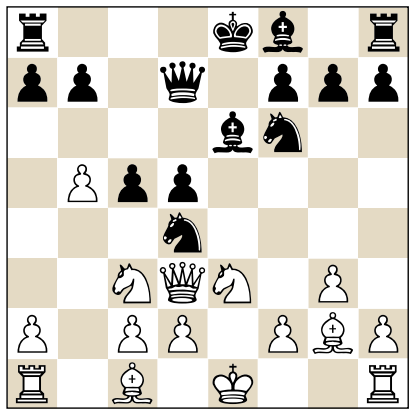
**8.g3** Here I mainly focused on 8.g4!? ♘c6 9.g5 ♘g4! 10.♘ed5 ♕d7 11.♘b5 0-0-0 12.♘dxc7 ♗f5. This leads to a very complicated position, but I feel that White is more dangerous.

**8...♘c6** I could also choose 8...d5, when after 9.♗g2 c6 10.d4 g6 11.0-0 ♗g7 12.f4!? we would have a sharp battle. **9.♗g2 ♕d7**



**10.b4!** Typical Rapport style, and also the move I was afraid of. Another possibility was 10.0-0 0-0-0 11.b4 d5 12.b5, when after 12...♘e7 or 12...♘a5, 13.d4 I prefer White.

**10...d5 11.b5 ♘d4 12.♕d3 c5!**



**13.0-0** If he plays 13.bxc6, then after 13...♘xc6 14.♘exd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 0-0-0 16.♘f4 ♕xd3 17.cxd3 (17.♘xd3 ♘d4) 17...♗f5 18.♗e4 (18.0-0 ♗d6 19.♗e4 ♗xe4 20.dxe4 ♗xf4 21.gxf4 ♖he8) 18...♘d4, Black has good compensation.

**Wei Yi was in contention for first place till the very last round. Against Richard Rapport, the 17-year-old Chinese had his revenge for the match he recently lost against the Hungarian in his hometown Yancheng.**

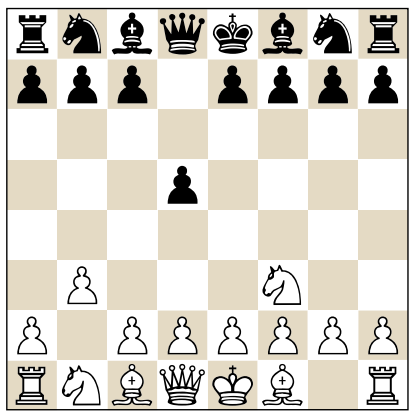
NEW IN CHESS

NOTES BY
**Anish Giri**

**Richard Rapport**
**Magnus Carlsen**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (8)
Réti Opening

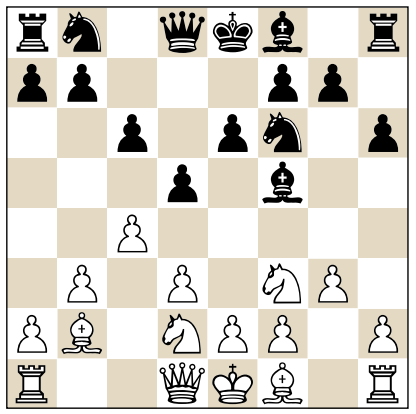
The day before this game I had played a crazy seven-hour game with Magnus, so if you allow me, I will take just a little bit of credit for this loss of his. Needless to say, I myself suffered my only loss on the very same day as well. So far, Richard Rapport had had a bad event, with a couple of losses and no wins, while Carlsen as pretty much always was fighting for first place.

**1.♘f3 d5 2.b3**



Pretty solid, for Richard's standards. In fact, the system is not at all bad for White. It is, however, not overly dangerous either.

**2...♗f5** One can also place the bishop on g4. **3.♗b2 e6 4.d3 h6 5.♘bd2 ♘f6 6.c4 c6 7.g3**

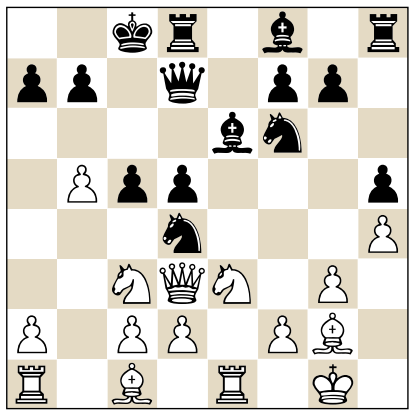


Finally, White makes a choice for the light-squared bishop. This double fianchetto is a well-known set-up, although not very popular at top-level.

**13...0-0-0** Now 13...g6 deserved attention. After 14.♖e1 ♗g7 15.♘exd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 0-0 Black has compensation because of the awkward position of White's pieces. But 14.♗a3! prevents Black's plan.

**14.♖e1** Preserving a safe place for his queen, but also giving me time to launch my attack.

**14...h5** Now it starts! **15.h4**



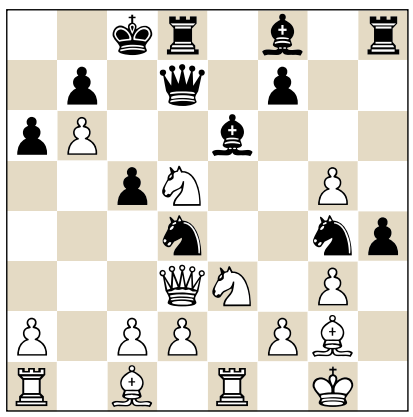
**15...g5!?** A crazy move. I had intended to play 15...♘f5, but I didn't like the position after 16.♘xf5 ♗xf5 17.♕f1, when my queenside looks weak.

Later I noticed 15...♖g8. During the game I felt it was a bit slow, but it's probably the best move. There may follow 16.♗b2 g5! 17.hxg5 ♖xg5 18.♘a4 ♘e4! 19.♘xc5 (19.♗xd4 cxd4 20.♕xd4 ♔b8, and White has problems) 19...♘f3+! 20.♗xf3 ♗xc5 21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♕xe4 ♕xd2. But it's very hard to find all accurate moves.

**16.b6! a6** In case of 16...gxh4 17.bxa7 ♔c7 White has 18.♗b2!, threatening 19.♘b5+.

**17.hxg5 ♘g4 18.♘cxd5 h4**

The crucial moment.



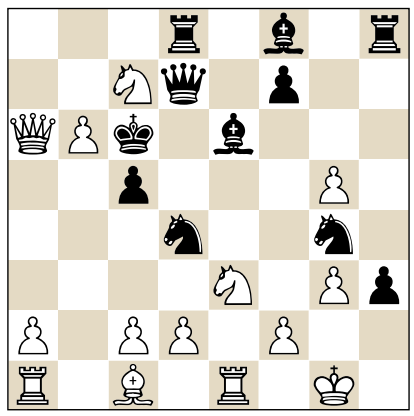
**19.♘c7**

19.♘xg4 would have given White the advantage: 19...♗xd5 20.♘f6 ♗xg2 21.♘xd7 ♘f3+ 22.♕xf3 ♗xf3 23.♗b2. But in the end my opponent chose a move that looks cool.

**19...h3 20.♗xb7+**

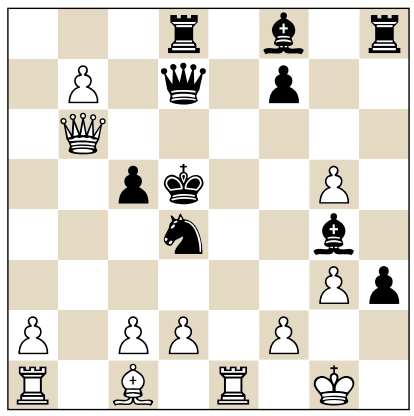
He decided to follow his plan. Here 20.♘xg4 would lead to a brilliant variation that ends with equality, as my engine points out: 20...hxg2 21.♘xe6 ♖h1+ 22.♔xg2 ♖xe1 23.♘xd8 ♕xg4 24.♗b2 ♖xa1 25.♗xa1 ♔xd8 26.♗xd4 cxd4 27.♕c4 ♕d7 28.f4.

**20...♔xb7 21.♕xa6+ ♔c6**



My king looks in danger, but actually his king is more difficult to defend. What a wild position!

**22.♘xg4 ♗xg4 23.b7+ ♔xc7 24.♕a5+ ♔b8 25.♕a8+ ♔c7 26.♕a5+ ♔d6 27.♕b6+ ♔d5**



It's all over. Although my king is in the centre of the board, there are many pieces to protect it and White cannot create any real threats.

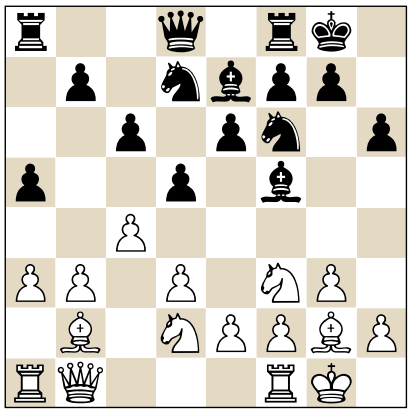
**28.♖e3 h2+ 29.♔h1 ♕c6! 30.♖b1**

A beautiful line is 30.♕xd8+ ♔c4+!.

**30...♕xb6 31.♖xb6 ♗d6 32.♗b2 ♖de8**

White resigned.

**7...♗e7 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.a3 a5 11.♕b1!?**



Actually, an interesting new idea in this known position. White usually plays ♕c2 and ♗c3, preparing b4. And, if needed, ♕b2 to support the essential push. I lost a blitz game in Leuven to Fabiano Caruana facing this plan, but my loss was definitely not to be blamed on the opening.

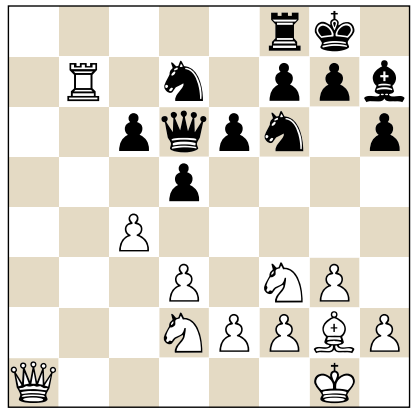
**11...♗h7 12.b4!**

The point. White is able to make this standard push without any additional preparation. The position, of course, remains very level anyway, but such little nuances are nice.

**12...axb4 13.axb4 ♕b6!?**

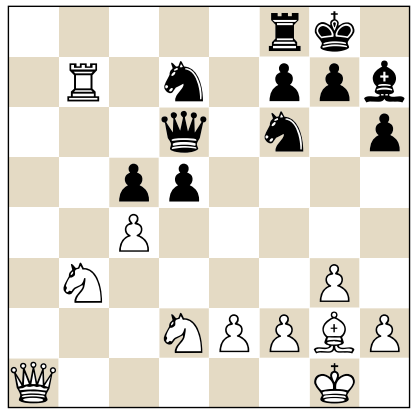
This forces massive simplifications.

**14.♗c3 ♖xa1 15.♕xa1 ♗xb4 16.♗xb4 ♕xb4 17.♖b1 ♕d6 18.♖xb7**



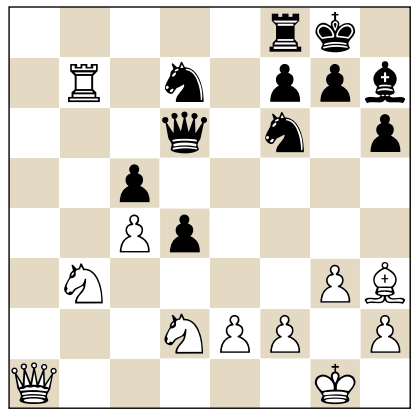
The position looks pretty equal, but I am pretty sure Magnus was not planning to end this game peacefully. Richard probably didn't really care.

**18...e5 19.d4 exd4 20.♘xd4 c5 21.♘4b3**



**21...d4** The easiest is 21...dxc4, if Black wanted to simplify: 22.♘xc4 ♕e6 23.♘e3 ♗e4. But by now it had become clear that Magnus was trying to maintain the tension.

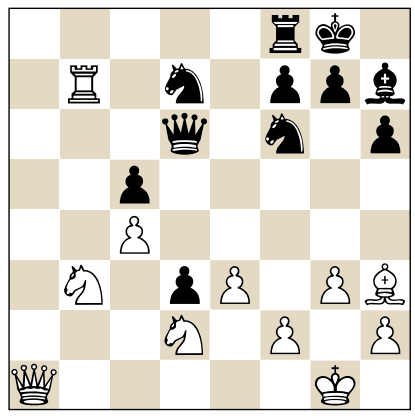
**22.♗h3**



**22...d3!?** Played after a long think. Carlsen was well aware that he was taking some risks here, but he probably didn't see any other way to create chances. 22...g5!? first also looks quite interesting.

22...♖b8 is the easiest option if Black wants to play solidly.

**23.e3!**



International Correspondence Chess Federation
Official Website | www.iccf.com

Play with the world's best correspondence chess players on one of the most advanced chess servers in the world.

Register at: **www.iccf-webchess.com**

Join a team of thousands playing great chess at ICCF.

**ICCF** also offers World Championships, Olympiads, and many other Team and Individual Tournaments where you can participate from any place around the globe.

View live games of the world's best players – also free games downloads.

Contact us at: **www.iccf.com**

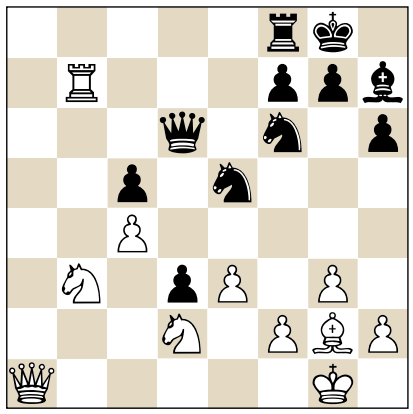
MARIA EMELIANOVA

**Magnus Carlsen can count on his opponent's understanding as he explains to Richard Rapport where he went too far in his attempts to play for a win.**

**23...♘e5?** A bad move, active but premature. The c5-pawn needed some support. 23...g5! would have justified the previous move. Black can follow it up with ...g4, creating a strong outpost for the knight on e5: 24.♗g2 g4 25.h4 ♗g6, and things are unclear.

**24.♗g2!**

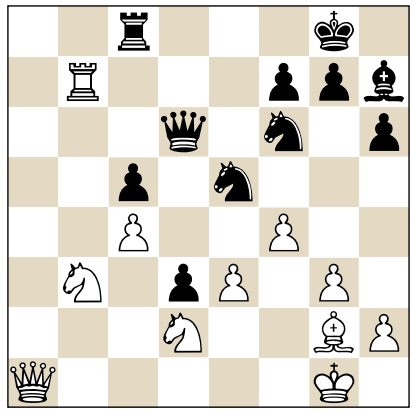
Now there are no tricks, and both ♕a5 and ♕a7 are on the agenda.



**24...♖c8?** Mistakes often come in twos! 24...g5 was a better try, though after 25.♕a7 ♖c8 26.♖b6 ♕d8 27.♖b5 the c5-pawn will fall.

24...♘ed7! was the move, and Carlsen at his best would have seen it! But Black can still survive here. He should hang on to the c5-pawn and grab some space with ...g5 at some point.

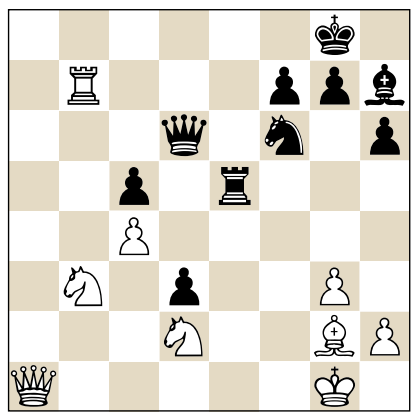
**25.f4!**



Energetic, and not fearing any ghosts.

**25...♘eg4 26.e4!** Black is being totally steamrolled. **26...♖e8 27.e5 ♘xe5 28.fxe5 ♖xe5**

Unfortunately for Carlsen, he is not only a piece down for a mere two pawns; he is also losing by force.



**29.♖b6! ♕e7 30.♖b8+ ♘e8 31.♗c6! ♖e1+ 32.♕xe1 ♕xe1+ 33.♘f1** Black resigned.

An incredibly quick and painful defeat for the World Champion. You would expect Richard to be jumping into puddles, but he seemed collected and almost left the playing hall without giving any interviews.

But of course Anna Rudolf, the press secretary of the tournament, was there to catch the hero of the day and ask him some questions on camera. Richard admitted that he was pleased, but without any false modesty he stressed that the game mainly showed that even Magnus can have an off-day. ■

**Wijk aan Zee 2017** — **cat. XXI**

| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | | TPR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Wesley So | IGM | USA | 2808 | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 2887 |
| 2 | Magnus Carlsen | IGM | NOR | 2840 | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | 1 | 8 | 2831 |
| 3 | Adhiban Baskaran | IGM | IND | 2653 | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | 1 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 7½ | 2815 |
| 4 | Levon Aronian | IGM | ARM | 2780 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 7½ | 2805 |
| 5 | Wei Yi | IGM | CHN | 2706 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | * | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7½ | 2811 |
| 6 | Sergey Karjakin | IGM | RUS | 2785 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | 0 | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 7 | 2777 |
| 7 | Pavel Eljanov | IGM | UKR | 2755 | ½ | 0 | 1 | 0 | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2779 |
| 8 | Anish Giri | IGM | NED | 2773 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 6½ | 2749 |
| 9 | Pentala Harikrishna | IGM | IND | 2766 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 6 | 2721 |
| 10 | Dmitry Andreikin | IGM | RUS | 2736 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 6 | 2723 |
| 11 | Radoslaw Wojtaszek | IGM | POL | 2750 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | 1 | 6 | 2722 |
| 12 | Ian Nepomniachtchi | IGM | RUS | 2767 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | 5 | 2662 |
| 13 | Richard Rapport | IGM | HUN | 2702 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | 4½ | 2644 |
| 14 | Loek van Wely | IGM | NED | 2695 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | * | 3½ | 2580 |

ALINA L'AMI

Interview **Adhiban Baskaran**

# ‘My parents always told me I was special; they didn’t want me to be ordinary.’

He was the ‘overnight sensation’ of the Tata Steel Masters. In the face of a horde of monsters, bottom-seed Adhiban Baskaran kept his promise and became a monster too. In an inspiring and uplifting interview with **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM**, the rising star explains how he finished shared third and why he wouldn’t mind being ‘the next big thing from India’.

Adhiban Baskaran feels that everything happens for a reason. That’s why he is excited when I meet him in the week after the Tata Steel tournament. The Indian grandmaster is staying at the home of Erwin and Alina l’Ami, and that morning he had been reading in Mikhail Tal’s book on the 1960 World Championship match, the match Tal won against Botvinnik. Adhiban is a huge fan of Tal’s, and now he has discovered with considerable joy that he was born two months after his idol passed away. To be precise, Tal died on June 28, 1992. Adhiban was born August 15, 1992. Could that mean something?

Tal is his big hero, but he also admires Alekhine and Kasparov.

ALINA L'AMI

**'Team AD' in Wijk aan Zee: Adhiban's father Baskaran and his second GM Vishnu Prasanna.**

'Alekhine was also great. I mean, to beat Capablanca... And Kasparov, of course, because he just dominated the chess world.' These are his favourites – the inspired attackers, the entertainers. In each generation you would have a player with a special appeal, for their daring chess. And now? I understand what he is hinting at and try to express his apparent thought. And he agrees: 'The throne is vacant, yeah.' He adds one more argument: 'The thing is, the first book I read was *Attack with Mikhail Tal*.'

Adhiban, or AD, as he likes to be called, thinks again and agrees that these are big shoes to fill, but why not? He understands that some people will laugh at him for even thinking like this, let alone expressing his dream. But he doesn't mind. 'If you're not sharing a dream you are maybe not so confident. If you are actually sharing, this means you are confident that this is where you want to be. It is telling yourself, this is where you want to go. OK, this spot... If I am worthy of it, of course, I would like to be the next Tal. I feel so close to him whenever I see his games. I can relate a lot to him.'

## Interior dialogue

Adhiban's speculation about his possible role in chess history might be seen as strangely immodest, but there is not a tinge of bragging in his daydreaming. They are the thoughts of an unusually optimistic personality, with an almost unsettling positivism and a deep trust in endless possibilities. As I was trying to compare him to other sportsmen, I briefly thought of Usain Bolt with his seemingly naïve or simple ways and his jocular boasting. But with Bolt you have the feeling that he is fully aware of the effect his words will have, while Adhiban isn't looking for any effect on others at all.

At times you get the impression that the Indian number 3 is conducting a permanent lively interior dialogue. And that whenever the thoughts and ideas from these dialogues come to the surface, they make him smile or laugh, as if he is a grateful audience listening to his own musings.

That's what happened when we sat down for the interview. He was in his usual upbeat mood and laughed a lot. He answered every question immediately, as if he had seen it coming and was happy to clarify. At the end of each answer he would usually select a laugh from his rich collection to indicate that things were still going fine.

When transcribing his answers I felt tempted to describe the ways in which he laughed. A short laugh of approval for what he had just said. A long, high laugh if he thought something very funny. Or just a friendly laugh to show that he was feeling well. As it would become tiresome to have all these asides in brackets, I will only to do so sparingly, just to occasionally remind you.

*Someone who knows you well told me before the tournament that he had no idea what you were going to do. Adhiban can lose a bunch of games, but he can also surprise us all.*

'Yeah, it's unpredictable. Sometimes I have this very good tournament and sometimes I have very bad tournaments. The important thing was to be on form. I had many ambitions, because this was my first super event and I really wanted to make my mark at this elite level. I wanted to finish on a plus score. I realized it was going to be a really difficult job, but somehow I felt I was up to it.

I just worked a lot. And I really pushed myself to the limit, mentally and physically. That was the key. I skipped many family reunions and such to be able to just focus on this. And my parents are really supportive. They also skipped them, because they wanted to be there for me.'

*With two draws and two losses your start was not very encouraging...*

'I have these very bad starts. I think I just need to get used to the atmosphere and the players. And the problem was that at first I had too much respect for my opponents and their ratings. I felt that maybe I was not ready for this. But then I realized I lost these games because of my own mistakes. They didn't do anything so special. So I thought I should just stop doing stupid things. If I just brought out the best in me, I felt I could be in this field. I knew I had to win just one game to change the event. Because then I would know I could beat these guys; then my confidence would improve. The Karjakin game was the game changer, because after that I knew I could do it.'

*Against Karjakin you played the French, an opening you had not played before.*
'Yes, it was the first time. It's my favourite opening as White, actually. When my opponent played the French, I was like, oh, this is going to be an easy point! Ha ha ha. And it was often true. But now I realize that the French is a fighting opening, actually. One of my friends suggested it. I was really confused, I was going through so many openings. I was really not happy with all the positions I came up with. And suddenly this friend suggested, maybe you should try this line, it's kind of interesting. It was around 7.30 in the evening, so I didn't have that much time, but it felt like an inspired decision. Then everything went smoothly.'

*Weren't you nervous? You are trying out something new against one of the best theoreticians in the world...*
'Yeah, I was a bit nervous, but the thing is I was in a situation in which I could actually gamble a bit. Because I knew it could turn out to be very bad, but it could also work out very well. If you take inspired decisions, they sometimes work really well.'

*What I found amazing was that after you had lost two of your first four games you kept your good mood. You were walking around and talking as if you were at least on plus one.*
'That is true. Actually my dad and my friend Vishnu, who was helping me as a second, they were also very surprised. My dad even told me that maybe I should go on the defensive after such a start. But the main thing is to keep a positive frame. The only way you can fix a bad start is to play well in the remaining rounds.'

*You are your own psychologist?*
'Yeah, something like that, yeah. I am pretty positive myself and also I have a sports psychologist at my place from whom I take training. But most of the time it's myself, yeah.'

*And your father?*
'Yes, I think I got it from him actually, the positive energy. He takes life in an easy carefree way, which helps. If you are not so worried about how your life will turn out, then you can easily forget about a bad start and give it your best in the remaining games. I came to know about such positive feelings around 2008, and after that I kept training myself. I had bad starts in so many events, like in Qatar in 2014, where I had zero out of two. Then the Baku Open, half a point out of three. But all these events I finished on a high note. In the remaining games I would score +5 or something like that. I got used to it somehow.

**'They are positive things, you are destined for great things, all this. Now when I am down I know it's temporary, I can always change it.'**

It was mainly because of my father, because he was reading all of those inspiring books. Every time we talk, he tells me about these books. They are positive things, you are destined for great things, all this. Now when I am down, I know it's temporary, I can always change it. So I always believed in my destiny.'

*What kind of books are these?*
'More psychological books, I would say. *You Can Win* by Shiv Kera. The name itself sounds very positive. And there is also this nice book, *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne, which I am literally following. You should check it out, it's everywhere (laughs).

*It's like the jacket you were wearing before the games...*
'Yes. Don't underestimate the power of a man born in August. When I saw that jacket I thought, oh, I have to get this. It looks so like me. I can feel the power when I wear it. I like it so much. I met Wesley So in a supermarket in Wijk aan Zee and he said, you should wear it when you're playing against Magnus. He won't like it (laughs). Yeah, I did consider it, but decided a suit would be better.'

*You impressed by choosing the French against Karjakin. Then the next round against Wesley So, you played the King's Gambit and cemented your popularity...*
'Yeah, an overnight sensation, right? The King's Gambit again was an inspired decision. It was suggested by my trainer, Ubilava. We spoke on Skype. I have always hated the Berlin and wanted to avoid it at any cost. And also I have been reading all these books about Morphy, Anderssen, Spassky, Tal. They have all tried it. It's a very romantic opening, so I really wanted to try it and join the legends who tried it in the past (laughs).
'And I came very close to beating So. Yeah, maybe next time! Ha ha. It was funny, after the game he asked where he went wrong, and I said, maybe you shouldn't have played ...d5. And he was like, yeah, maybe I should not have given the pawn back immediately.'

*But you started winning anyway...*
'Yeah, yeah. This Radek game (against Wojtaszek – DJtG) was so funny. OK, I was supposed to win that game, but then did something stupid and I was completely lost before the time-control. But then I did something which I always do: fight hard in a lost position. And he started going wrong... Also, instead of thinking about a draw, I was wondering how I could actually win, even in a hopeless situation. And I think that was the key. I was always looking for tricks to

NEW IN CHESS

**Adhiban's first encounter with World Champion Magnus Carlsen. The start of a beautiful lifelong rivalry?**

turn the game around, and not just make a draw. And then when I got the first chance, I used it.'

*You say you are good at hanging in there. Is there a moment when you switch to defence? Now I will dig in my heels and you will have to work hard if you want to beat me.*
'Yeah, I am not gonna lose so easily. If you want a point, you're gonna have to work for it (laughs).'

*You talk to yourself?*
'Yeah, sure, I do a lot of self-talk during the game and it helps me. Also before my game against Carlsen, I told myself, OK, he will do anything to throw you off balance. I even predicted that he would come to the game late, just to surprise me like what Fischer did against Spassky. So I was prepared. Mostly, before the gong was hit he would just come running, but that game he was really late. After the gong he took like a minute or two to come. But I was laughing to myself, because I knew he would do it.'

*But before you played Carlsen, you were on the ropes against Wei Yi.*
'Yes, I suffered a lot in that game. But I told myself, OK, I have seen worse (laughs), so I can do this again. I am not going to lose to this Wei Yi. It's also kind of personal. Because people think he's the next big thing from China...'

*And you're the next big thing from India, so...*
'Yeah, yeah, I would love to be that, so I could not afford to lose. And I had a plus score against him before the event, so I just wanted to give him a fight. It's not for personal enmity, it's a matter of prestige. Because we have this rivalry between India and China. For the sake of India I have to fight.'

*You already mentioned the game against Magnus. You are fond of statements. This time you sent friends a message saying, tomorrow is the start of a beautiful lifelong rivalry...*
'(Hesitates) Actually, the funny thing is, I did not send it. I could actually have said it, because I have been dreaming to play with him for a long time. Yeah, (thinking) maybe someday I would like to play a match. I didn't post it, but it was going through my mind. Actually, I am curious (with a high laugh), it's as if someone posted my thoughts.'

*These days your thoughts are so strong that...*
'Everyone can actually feel them, ha ha. Actually, an old friend I had not seen for many years contacted me before the game, on Facebook. He said that he had had a dream that I was beating Carlsen. So I was thinking, this is so great, guys to who I don't speak are having dreams about my game against Carlsen. This is like a big revolution in India. This doesn't happen so often, that you pray for someone you haven't met for so many years. So I knew what to do, ha ha, and I came pretty close, but I missed it in the end. I even saw Queen g4, but not the follow-up... a blind spot, I didn't see it.'

*Did you speak to him after the game?*
'No, I didn't speak to Magnus. I was hoping to speak to him at the closing, but he was not happy, so I decided to stay away.'

*Do you think that's understandable?*
'No, actually not. I thought it was understandable, but then my friend said... Maybe he does not respect the sport... Whoever plays the best, wins the tournament, but if you don't, you don't win. Then you should not act as if the other people are doing something wrong. You should respect the sport. That is why I am really graceful when I lose, because I know they played that game better than me. That's why they won. We all have this passion for the sport, so I think we should respect that.'

*In the end you finished third...*
'Yeah, shared third. That's an honour. Actually I was hoping it would be number two, because that was the number I took at the drawing of lots. But I was quite close (laughs).'

*You were quite optimistic at the drawing of lots.*
'Yeah, they were asking me, so how do you play against such monsters? And I said, I will become a monster myself!'

*Last year you wrote an article in New In Chess about your win in the Challengers. People who read that must*

*think that Wijk aan Zee is the coldest and windiest place on earth.*
'Yes, I actually told my father and my friend Vishnu that this time I was ready to fight the cold of Wijk aan Zee with the fire in my heart. After the fifth or sixth round I was getting used to the climate. This time I was ready. Also I realized I could not really complain about the weather, because it's part of the Tata Steel Masters.'

## A sportsperson

*You spoke about your father, who accompanied you. What is the role of your mother in your career?*
'I always joke that I got my positive thinking from my mother and the carefree attitude that helps me bounce back from losses, from my father. They have managed to somehow ingrain their best qualities in me. My mom taught me chess, actually. And she always used to tell me, you are destined for great things. One day your time will come and you will show the world what you are made of (laughs). My parents always told me I was special; they didn't want me to be ordinary. So they wanted me to be a sportsperson from the start. If it had not been chess, I would have been some other sport, but definitely not something else like a software engineer or a doctor. I had to make this call between chess and football, and many people scared my mom that football is a rough sport, maybe it's not for your son. So then chess felt like an easier option.'

*Were you good at football?*
'Eh, (hesitates) OK. I used to kick balloons, as a kid. But every kid does that. Almost everyone in my entire family plays chess, so... Also my brother, he is already something like a state champion, I think. It runs in the family.'

*But you were the special one.*
'I was the first special one, let's say. He's the second.'

*You have this positive attitude, and you laugh a lot. Do you have any comedians or humourists that inspire you; that you find really funny?*
'We have a lot of guys in the Indian film industry, but I am not sure... I like all the super-hero movies actually. Sure, Batman, all these Marvel movies. I'm a big fan. First it's nice to see them conquer their fears and overcome the impossible. I feel I can also do this in real life. So I get the inspiration from all those movies. To do the impossible (laughs loudly).'

*Where do you see yourself in the hierarchy of Indian chess now? There is Anand, who floats somewhere high above the others, and then?*
'So far I am number three in the rankings. I would really like to go up even further, of course. But I still have a lot to do to show that I really belong there. But I feel this is where my destiny is. I think if I keep improving and get more invitations like this, I will really be able to show my full potential.

**'That was my new resolution, that everyone there knows about me by the end of the year!'**

'It's funny, just before Wijk aan Zee I went to the club where I was introduced to chess. I had to go to get a Russian visa for the Aeroflot Open and it was in the same place, the Russian Cultural Centre in Chennai. And no one recognized me! And I thought to myself: so you only know Anand and nobody else. One day I will make sure that all of you know my name! (Laughs loudly) That was my new resolution... that everyone there should know about me by the end of the year!'

# Adhiban Baskaran

**Born:** August 15, 1992, Mayiladuthurai, India

**Career highlights**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2007: | Gold (with India) at World Youth Olympiad |
| 2008: | Gold (with India) at World Youth Olympiad |
| 2008: | U-16 World Champion |
| 2008: | Wins National Challengers |
| 2009: | Indian Champion |
| 2010: | Olympiad debut in Khanty-Mansiysk |
| 2013: | Reaches 3rd round in Tromsø World Cup |
| 2014: | Wins Biel Masters |
| 2014: | 2nd in Asian Continental Championship |
| 2014: | Bronze with Indian team at Tromsø Olympiad |
| 2015: | Tie for 1st Biel Masters |
| 2015: | Wins Benasque Open |
| 2015: | Wins (with Solvay team) Spanish First Division |
| 2016: | Wins Tata Steel Challengers |
| 2016: | Tie for 1st Hasselbacken Open |
| 2016: | Gold with India at Asian teams |
| 2016: | 2nd in Abu Dhabi Open |
| 2016: | October, highest rating so far: 2689 |
| 2017: | Tata Steel Masters 3rd place |

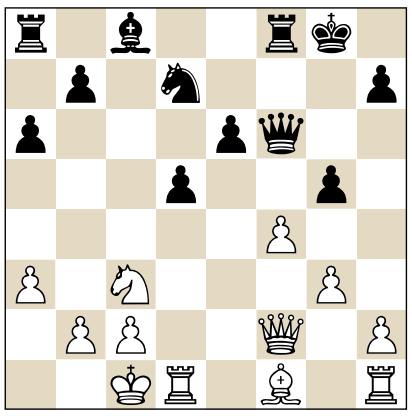
*They did not know how they were inspiring you.*
'No, I should go back and thank them!'

*You told me your preferred name is AD. This morning I read about AR, augmented reality, and I was wondering what AD stands for, augmented what?*
'I really have no idea. Augmented Destiny perhaps, because I really love the word destiny (laughs).'

This is how Adhiban fared against the World Champion and his most recent Challenger. Or rather the other way round.

NOTES BY
**Adhiban Baskaran**

**Sergey Karjakin**
**Adhiban Baskaran**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (5)

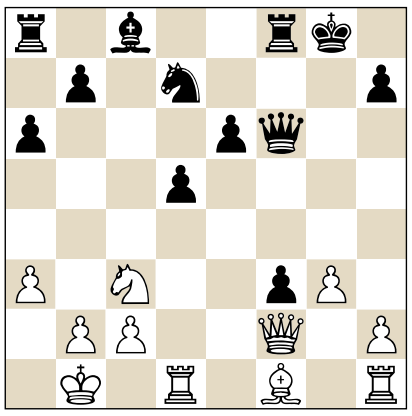


position after 17.0-0-0

**17...gxf4** I had managed to outprepare Karjakin (World Defence Champion), which was already a great feat, and that in an opening which I just played for the first time in my life!

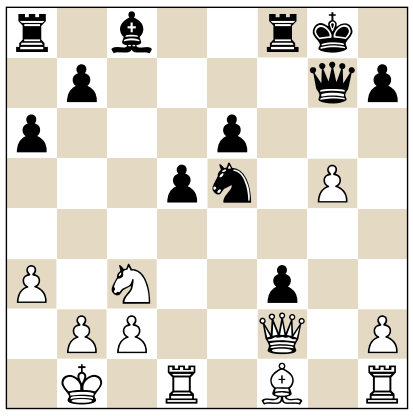
**18.♔b1** 18.♖d4!?. Time is money! 18...fxg3 19.♕xg3+ (19.♖g4+ ♔h8 20.♕xg3) 19...♔h8 20.♖h4 was the way, with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

**18...f3!** Not giving another chance to open the files.

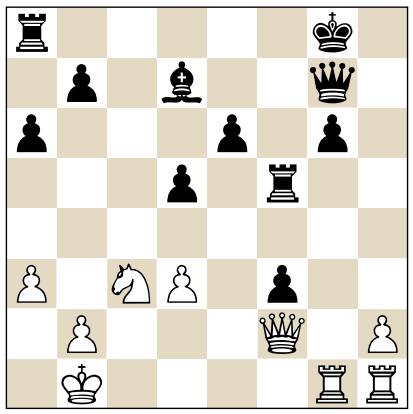


**19.g4** A dubious venture!
It was still possible to equalize with 19.♖d4!? ♕g7! 20.♖f4! ♘f6 and get the central pawns rolling (apparently, I had to be greedy with 20...♘e5 21.♘a4 ♗d7 22.♘c5, although White has sufficient compensation for the pawn). I was very optimistic about my chances, but the comp as usual isn't impressed and claims that White is better after 21.♖xf3 e5 22.♕e1! ♗g4 23.♖f2, with strong pressure on the centre pawns. So I guess I will agree with it on this one ☺.

**19...♘e5 20.g5 ♕g7**



**21.g6** Maybe too optimistic, but definitely an interesting practical try! I had been expecting 21.h4!? ♗d7 22.h5, trying to annoy Black with ideas of h6 and g6. **21...hxg6 22.♗d3** After the game Karjakin suggested 22.♕d4!? as a stronger option. **22...♗d7 23.♖dg1** 23.♖hg1!? ♖f6, with zero compensation for the two pawns. **23...♘xd3 24.cxd3 ♖f5**

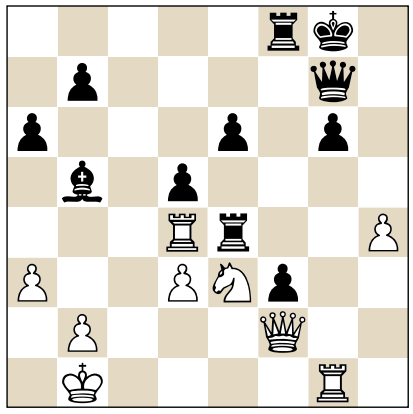


A nice spot, with multi-functional possibilities for the rook!

**25.♖g4 ♖af8 26.♖hg1 ♗e8 27.♘d1 ♖h5** An unnecessary sortie.

**28.h4 ♖e5!** I came back to my senses just in time!

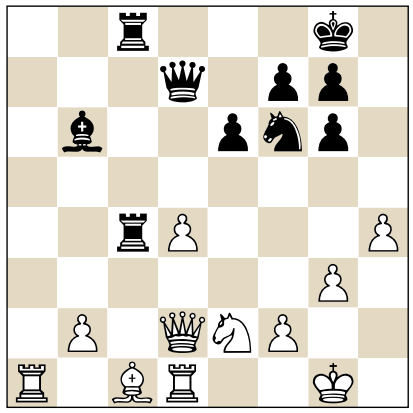
**29.♘e3 ♗b5 30.♖d4 ♖e4!**



**31.♖xg6** The position was difficult but this hastens the end.
The alternative was 31.dxe4 ♕xd4 32.♖xg6+ ♔f7 (one advantage of provoking h4 would be 32...♔h7, but unfortunately this runs into 33.♖h6+!) 33.♖g4 (33.♕xf3+ ♔xg6 34.♕xf8 ♕xe3, and White doesn't have a perpetual) 33...dxe4, with a winning advantage.

**31...♗xd3+** White resigned.
My first win against a World Championship Challenger. A nice memory.

**Magnus Carlsen**
**Adhiban Baskaran**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (11)



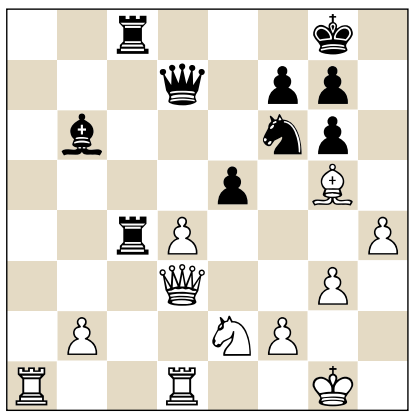
position after 26...♖bc4

An innocent boy struggling against the elite field, towards the end I had grown into a player capable of fighting on equal terms against the best in the business... The World Champion himself!

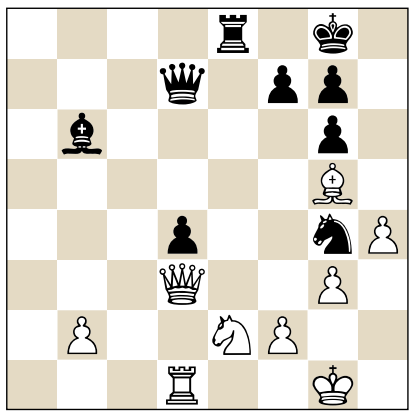
**27.♕d3** So far it had been an intense fight, but with the next move I decided to turn up the heat even more.

**27...e5!?** Not giving White time to

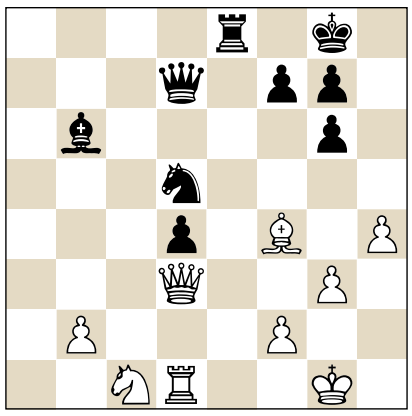
defend against the onslaught. But at the same time I allow him to reach a safe haven.
That the threat is stronger than the execution is once again proven right here with 27...♘g4!?.
**28.♗g5** Luckily, Carlsen didn't go for an endgame.
White's best chance was 28.dxe5 ♕xd3 29.♖xd3 ♘g4 (this seemed drawish but it felt like the only way to continue the pressure and the position didn't look so easy to defend) 30.♖c3 ♘xf2 31.♖a6 ♖xc3 32.bxc3 ♗c5 33.♔g2 ♘d3 34.♗f4 ♖e8 35.e6 ♖xe6 36.♖xe6 fxe6 37.♔f3 e5 38.♗d2 ♘f2! (an important move, preventing the king from running to the queenside) 39.c4 e4+ 40.♔f4 ♗d6+ 41.♔e3 ♗c5+ 42.♘d4 ♔f7, with a draw.



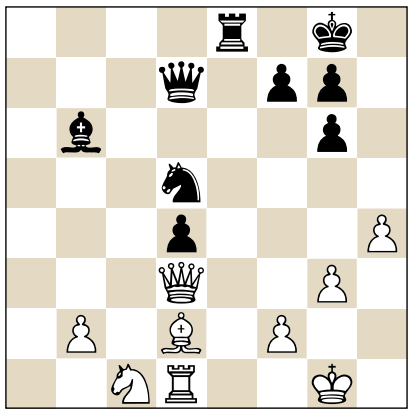
**28...♘g4!** Obviously, I was not going to allow the exchange of the sexy knight for the silly bishop.
**29.♖ac1** Reducing the pressure.
Dubious was 29.f3, since 29...♖xd4! wins on the spot!: 30.♘xd4 ♗xd4+ 31.♔g2 ♘f2, followed by ...♕h3+.
**29...♖xc1 30.♖xc1 ♖e8!** I felt that retaining the rooks would help me fight for the advantage.
**31.♖d1 exd4**



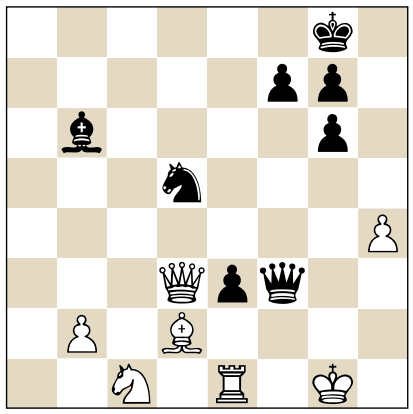
Now I am in total control... at least for the next few moves ☺.
**32.♗f4 ♘f6!?** Once again preparing the sly ...♕h3.
**33.♘c1** 33.♕f3 ♕b5 wins a pawn.
**33...♘d5**



**34.♗d2**
34.♕f3! had been his plan all along, intending to blockade the d-pawn with the knight, but I think for some reason both of us thought that this queen move wasn't possible here in view of 34...♕f5 35.♘d3 ♗c7. I thought I was better here, but I had totally missed 36.g4, and White is out of danger (the Comp laughs at my calculation and concludes that even 36.♔g2 is totally fine. I would like to argue but it usually understands the position better ☺).

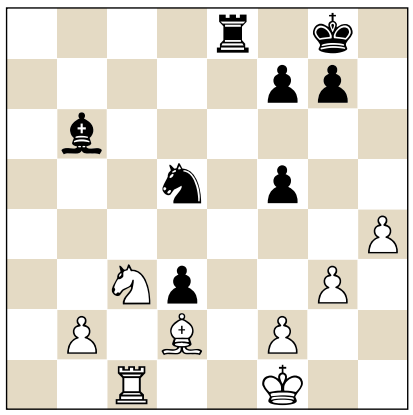


**34...♕c6?!**
After maintaining my level for a long time, I finally slipped.
34...♕g4!? was the first thing that came to my mind, thanks to my killer instinct! If only I had listened to it ☹.
35.♖e1 ♖e3!. This did occur to me. (35...♘e3 was shooting into thin air!)
36.fxe3 ♕xg3+ 37.♔f1 ♕f3+! 38.♔g1, and I thought that it was only a draw and left the variation... But 38...dxe3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Just one more move I needed to have seen, and it would have been a great historic moment!
**35.♘e2** Suddenly it wasn't easy to defend the d4-pawn.
35.♘b3 ♘e3 was my genius idea.
**35...♕f6**
What else? I realized that my advantage had evaporated and decided to aim for an equal endgame.
**36.♖c1**
After 36.♗g5 I was planning to continue with 36...♘b4! (36...♕d6 37.♘xd4) 37.♗xf6 ♘xd3 38.♗xd4 ♘xb2!, with a draw.
**36...♕f5 37.♕xf5 gxf5 38.♔f1 d3 39.♘c3**



**39...♘xc3** I decided I had had enough fun for one day and wanted to force a draw ☺.
Another way was 39...♘f6!? 40.♖e1 ♘e4 41.♘xe4 fxe4 42.g4, with an equal endgame.
**40.♖xc3 ♗d4**
And we drew after a few more moves.
Until next time... ■

Judit Polgar

# Push those rook pawns

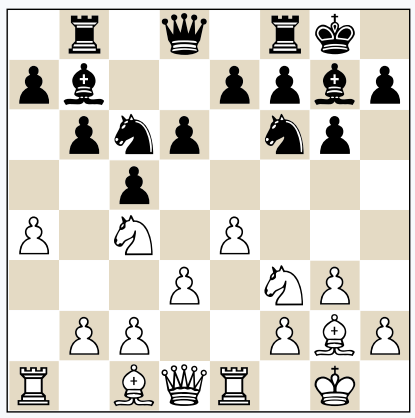
On the tropical island of Aruba, **JUDIT POLGAR** discovered the unique creative universe of Bent Larsen.

Bent Larsen was one of the most colourful figures on the chess scene of the 1960s and '70s. His original, neo-hypermodern style, his outstanding tournament wins, his perseverance and his outspoken optimism made the Great Dane a legend while still active as a player, despite his systematic failure to become a world title Challenger.

After the Women versus Veterans match tournament in Aruba in 1992, where Larsen was present, although he did not play, I stayed on the island for another week and had the pleasure of getting an insight into his unique creative universe. I was aware of his habit of causing strategic damage to the enemy position by advancing his rook pawns, but I got a deeper understanding of it when he showed me some of his favourite games.

Here is the one which impressed me most, since Larsen carried out this plan on both wings.

**Bent Larsen**
**Svetozar Gligoric**
Vinkovci 1970

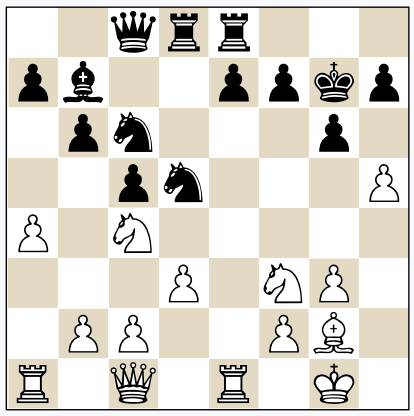


position after 10...♗b7

**11.h4!?** Apparently an insane move, weakening the g4-square without threatening h4-h5. Larsen must have anticipated that a player with a classical style like Gligoric would not be able to refrain from gaining space in the centre with ...d6-d5, exd5 ...♘xd5, thus finally allowing the h-pawn to advance.

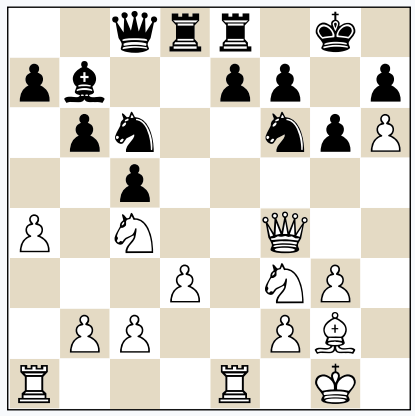
**11...♕c7 12.♗d2 ♖bd8 13.♕c1 d5** Had Larsen played against himself he might have faced either 13...♖fe8, preparing to meet ♗h6 with ...♗h8, or 13...♗a8, preventing the later Zwischenzug a5-a6.

**14.♗f4 ♕c8 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♗h6 ♖fe8 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.h5**



**18...♘f6 19.h6+** This molesting pawn may also become weak later, but after 19.hxg6 hxg6, Black could use the opening of the h-file with ...♖h8, followed by a gradual build-up to an attack.

**19...♔g8 20.♕f4**

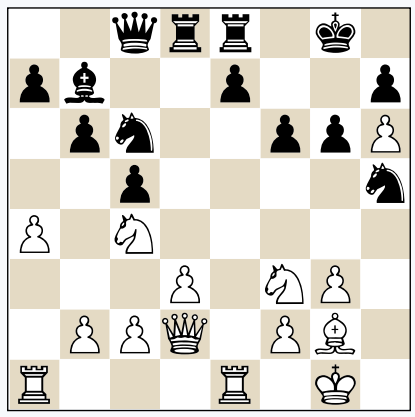


**20...♘h5?!** The main cause of Black's future problems.

Larsen recommended 20...♘d4?, missing some tactical nuances in which the h6-pawn plays an important part: 21.♘xd4 ♗xg2 (21...♖xd4 22.♗xb7 ♕xb7 23.♕xf6! mates due to the back rank weakness) 22.♖xe7! ♕h3 The only way to try muddying the waters, but White wins with a few accurate moves: 23.f3 ♗h1 24.♘e3 ♖xe7 25.♕xf6 ♕xg3+ 26.♔xh1 ♕h3+ 27.♔g1 ♕g3+ 28.♘g2 ♕e5 29.♕xe5 ♖xe5 30.♘c6, with an extra knight in the endgame.

The best way to kick the queen away was the recentralizing 20...♘d5.

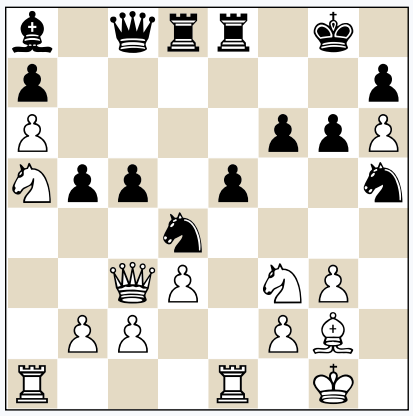
**21.♕d2 f6** Gligoric might have expected play to continue on the kingside, but Larsen executes another of his trademark moves on the opposite wing.



**22.a5! b5** With the knight on d5 Black could have maintained the tension with 22...♕c7, but here the b-pawn would be vulnerable after 23.axb6 axb6 24.c3, planning ♕c2-b3. If 24...b5 then 25.♘a3, and Black's queenside problems persist.

**23.a6!** Larsen designs a similar career for his a-pawn as for its colleague.

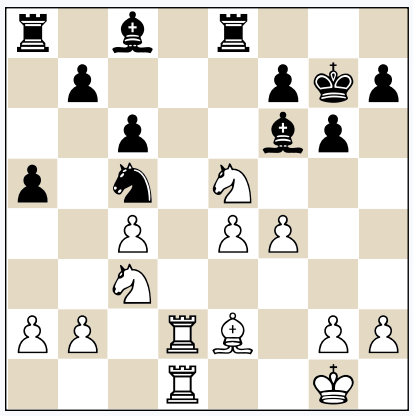
**23...♗a8** 23...♗xa6 24.♘a5 offers White great queenside play against Black's poorly coordinated minor pieces. In short, he will win back either the a7-pawn or the c5-pawn. **24.♘a5 e5 25.♕c3 ♘d4** Black seems to have done everything right, but the a6-pawn allows White to maintain the initiative.



**26.♘b7! ♗xb7 27.axb7 ♕xb7** If 27...♕c7? then 28.♘xd4 exd4 29.♕b3+, followed by ♖xe8, ♖xa7 and ♕xb5, wins. **28.♘xd4 cxd4 29.♗xb7 dxc3 30.bxc3 ♖e7 31.♖xa7** And White soon won the b5-pawn and the game. The h6-pawn no longer creates mating threats, but keeps the h5-knight out of play.

As a King's Indian player, I was used to advancing my a-pawn even before spending that week with Larsen. My usual idea was securing the c5-knight, but sometimes the pawn served more ambitious plans.

**Lubomir Ftacnik**
**Judit Polgar**
Budapest Zonal playoff 1993

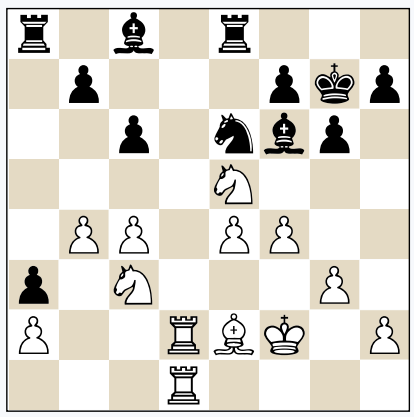


position after 16.♖fd1

**16...a4!** An ambitious move, preparing to shatter White's queenside stability.

**'Gligoric might have expected play to continue on the kingside, but Larsen executes one more of his trademark moves on the opposite wing.'**

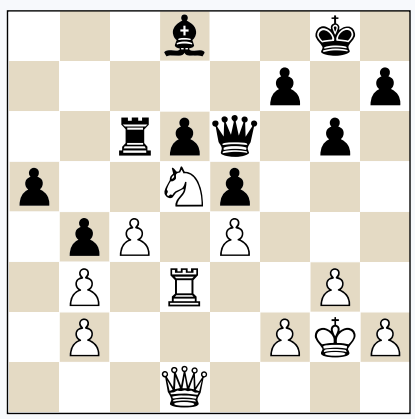
I could have retrieved the pawn with 16...♗xe5 17.fxe5 ♖xe5, but after 18.♖d8 there would be no simple way to complete my development, thus making the weakness on e4 irrelevant.
**17.♔f2** I didn't bother to consider the stabilizing 17.a3. If you know ...a5-a4 will be met by a2-a3, you just go for it. The b2- and c4-pawns are chronically weak and the knight gets the b3-square for annoying jumps. I could have played 17...♖a5 (using the space cleared by the pawn to avoid the back rank pin) 18.♔f2 ♗xe5 19.fxe5 ♖xe5 20.♖d8 ♗e6, when White's activity along the d-file is sterile while the weaknesses stay.
**17...a3! 18.b4** More or less forced, since the seemingly solid 18.b3 allows 18...♖xe5! 19.fxe5 ♗xe5. Now the only way to avoid a knight fork on e4 is 20.♖d4!?, but then I could clear the path for my daring pawn with 20...♘xb3! 21.axb3 ♗xd4+ 22.♖xd4 a2 23.♘xa2 ♖xa2, followed by ...♖b2 and ...♔f6-e5, with complete domination.
**18...♘e6 19.g3**



**19...g5!** After the partial queenside success I now shatter White's stability on the opposite wing. This is similar to Larsen's global approach in the previous game.
With the c3-knight defended, White could complicate matters with ♘xf7 ...♔xf7, ♗h5+ but now 20.♘xf7 loses a piece to 20...♗xc3.
20.♔f3 fails to defend the f4-pawn properly in view of 20...gxf4 21.gxf4 ♘xf4. After losing his extra pawn, White had nothing to show against my strong dark-squared bishop and went down quickly.

I played the next game years after my meeting with Larsen, and this time the advance of my rook pawn implied a much deeper idea.

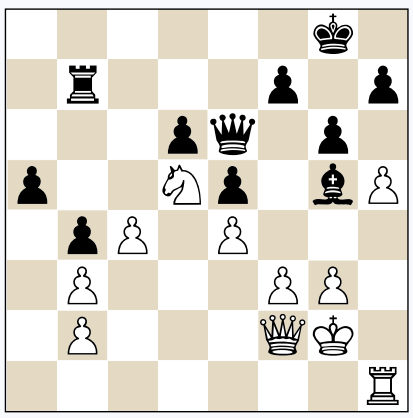
**Judit Polgar**
**Vishy Anand**
Wijk aan Zee 1998



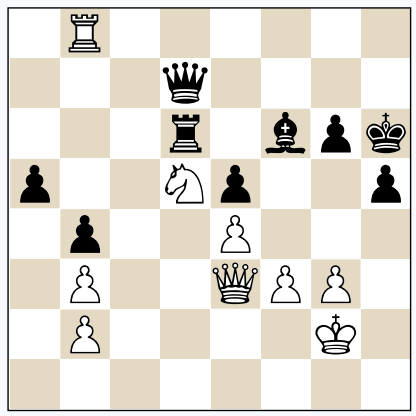
position after 34...♔g8

Despite my overwhelming advantage, destroying Black's fortress is not easy. I intended to break with either c4-c5, f2-f4 or both, but decided this would work better if I could weaken his king's defence before starting concrete action in the centre.
**35.h4 ♔g7?!** Anand must have thought that the further advance of my pawn would just concede the g5-square to his bishop, and that in case of hxg6, he would be able to preserve the integrity of his kingside structure with ...hxg6. But the latter supposition is not true.
35...h5! was absolutely necessary. I wanted to prepare an attack with f2-f3 and g3-g4 in that case.
**36.h5 ♗g5 37.♕f3** The start of a manoeuvring phase, with several neutral moves aimed at getting closer to the

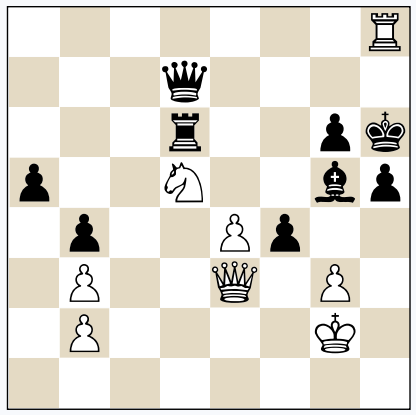
time-control. But my plan was to create threats along the h-file so as to force ...fxg6 as an answer to hxg6.
**37...♖c8 38.♖d1 ♖c6 39.♕e2 ♖c8 40.♖h1 ♔g8 41.f3 ♖b8 42.♕f2 ♖b7**



**43.hxg6!** Everything was prepared for this already. **43...fxg6** Unfortunately for Black, 43...hxg6 44.♕g1, followed by ♕h2, yields White a decisive attack. **44.c5!** After weakening the black king's defence, opening the centre is entirely justified. **44...dxc5 45.♕xc5 ♗d8 46.♖c1** Switching to the c-file, since there was little left to do on the h-file. **46...♔f7 47.♕e3** Preparing to set up a major piece battery with the rook in front of the queen. **47...♔g7 48.♖c4 ♖d7 49.♕c1 h5** Preparing an escape for the king on h6. **50.♖c6 ♖d6 51.♖c8 ♕d7 52.♕c5 ♔h6 53.♖b8 ♗f6 54.♕e3+**

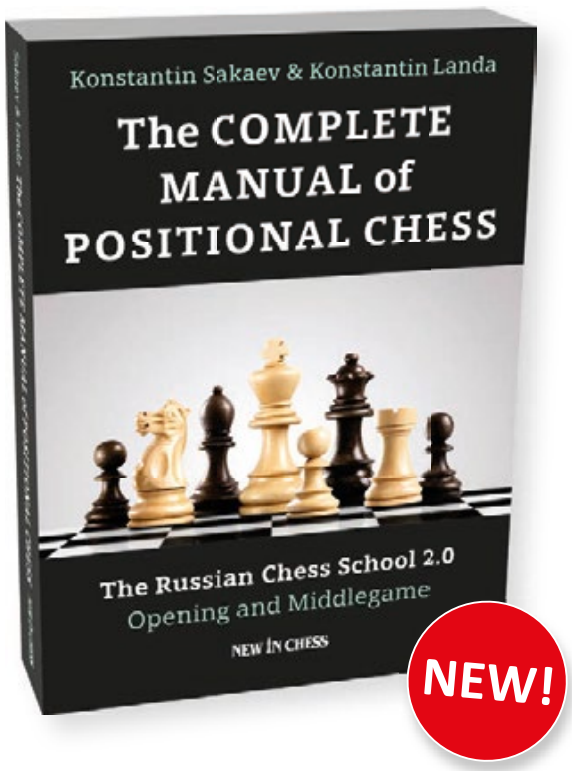


**54...♗g5?** Missing some tactical tricks. 54...♔g7 would have been more stubborn: 55.♖a8 ♕b5 (if 55...♕c6 56.♖a7+ ♖d7 57.♕b6! wins. As we see, there are tactical tricks available on the whole board) 56.♘c7 Threatening 57.♘e8+. 56...♖d3 57.♕e2 ♕d7 58.♘d5 ♖xb3 59.♖xa5. With the black rook isolated on b3, White's attack will continue unhindered. **55.f4 exf4 56.♖h8+**



Anand resigned, probably after calculating the following beautiful line to its inevitable end: 56...♔g7 57.♕d4+ ♗f6 58.♕xf6+! ♖xf6 59.♖h7+! ♔xh7 60.♘xf6+ ♔g7 61.♘xd7, winning. ■


# Probably the most thorough grounding in the history of teaching chess




This manual was recently created at the DYSS, the special sports school for young talents in Moscow. Sakaev and Landa present a complete set of instructions for trainers and self-improvers.

You will learn not only how to enhance your fundamental knowledge and technical skills, but also how to work on your physical and psychological conditioning. You are handed basic and advanced tools to improve in the areas that really matter: quick development and fighting for the centre in the opening, clean calculation and decision-making in the middlegame, tackling your fear of disturbing the material balance and, last but not least, managing the role the chess computer plays in your life.

With its all-encompassing approach this ground-breaking book allows you to reap the fruits of the long tradition of instructive excellence in Russia.

**paperback • 320 pages • €27.95 • available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com • a NEW IN CHESS publication**

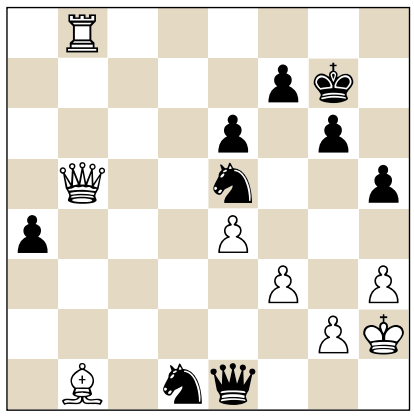
# MAXIMize your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

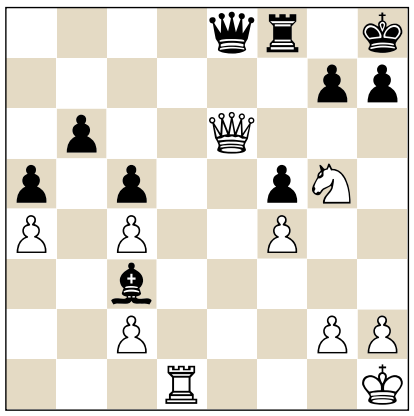
NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

## Find the best move in the positions below

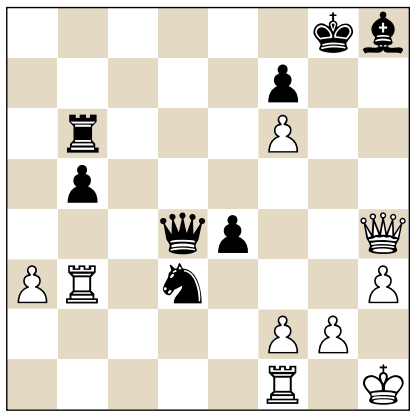
Solutions on page 101



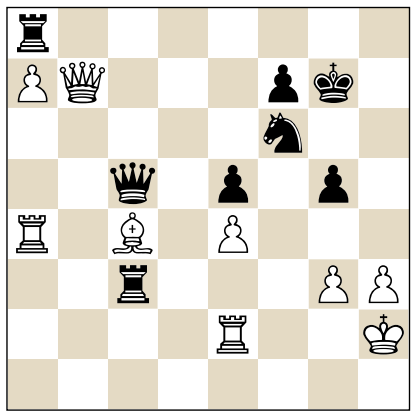
1. Black to move



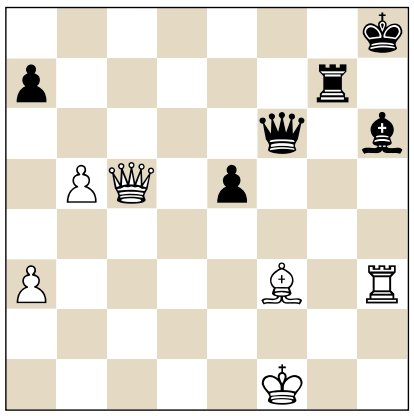
2. White to move



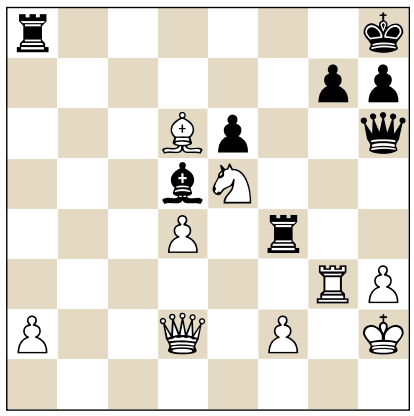
3. White to move



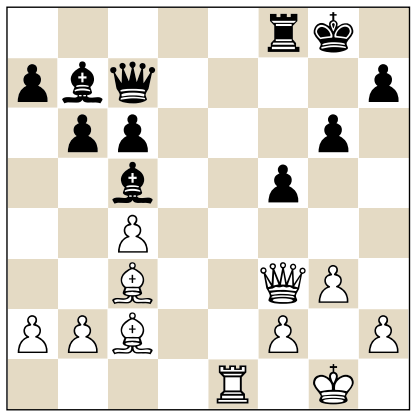
4. Black to move



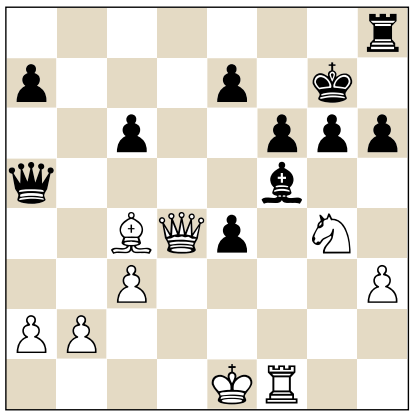
5. White to move



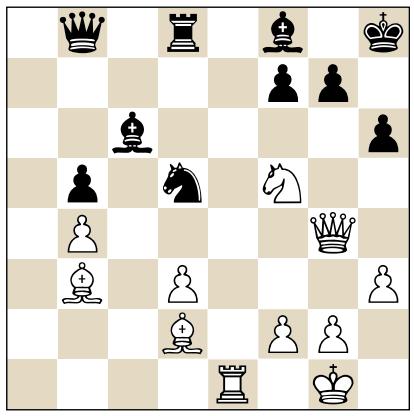
6. White to move



7. White to move



8. White to move



9. White to move

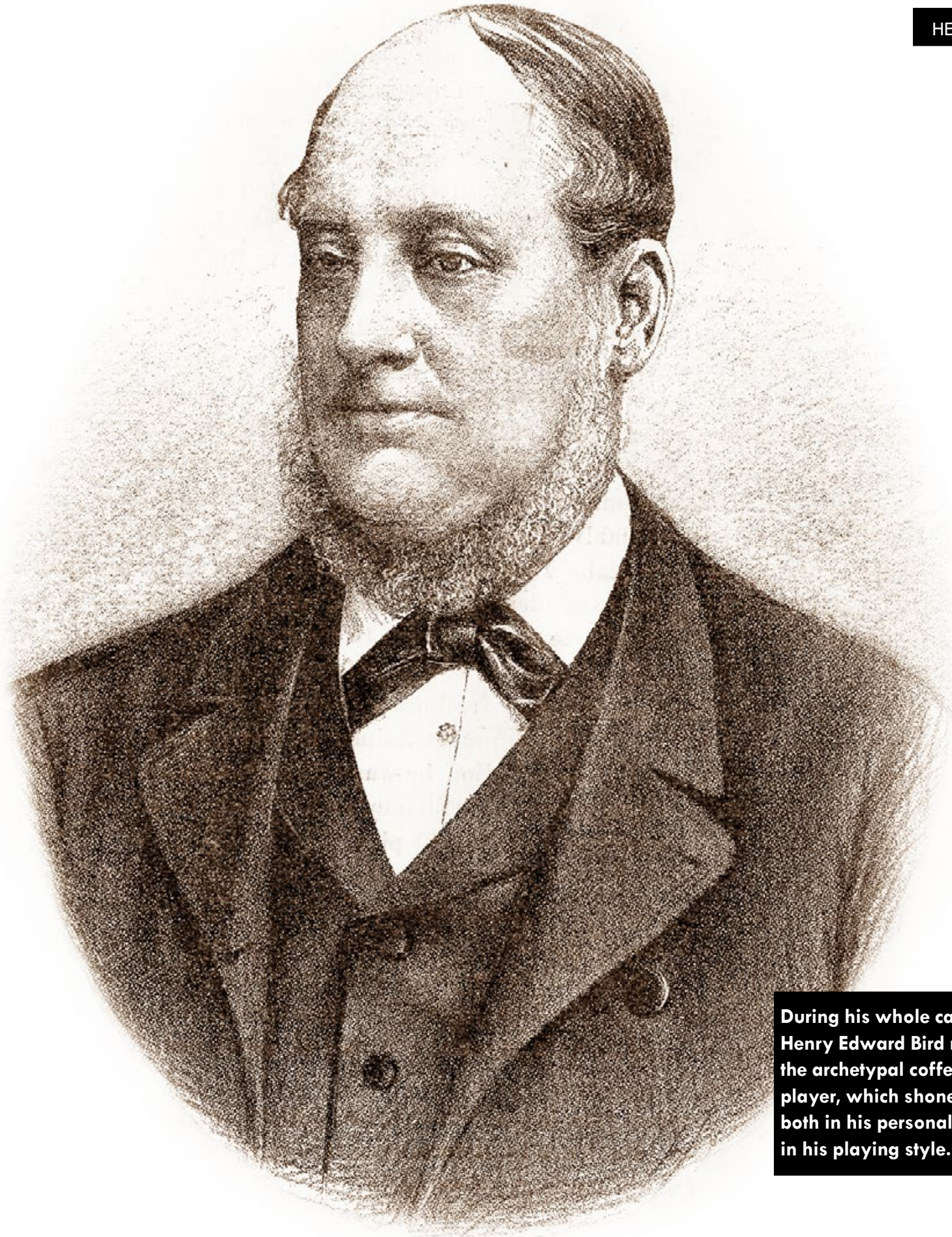
# A fresh Bird's view

## The life and long career of Henry Bird (1829-1908)

His name is still known for the openings that are named after him, but other than that Henry Edward Bird has largely been forgotten. That is a pity, **HANS RENETTE** argues, as Bird was one of the grand old men of 19th century chess. In his career, which spanned five decades, he was a tireless promotor of the game, and his victims included Staunton, Steinitz and Lasker. Bird was also a prolific writer and the winner of the first official beauty prize.

When Viktor Kortchnoi died last summer, I read a quote from his last interview in New In Chess: 'I will only stop playing chess if nature forces me.' That statement, and much of Kortchnoi's career, reminded me of Henry Bird. Kortchnoi's career lasted more than half a century, and his love for chess was unconditional. The English master never reached Kortchnoi's level, but he was one of the top players of his time and he, too, was at his best at a later age. Till the very end he was a player to be reckoned with. Much of Bird's legacy can be found in the mostly forgotten books he wrote, but today's players will only know the openings that carry his name and reflect his adventurous – and slightly dubious – style: Bird's Opening (1.f4) and the Bird Variation in the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘d4).

Henry Edward Bird was born in Portsea in 1829. Driven by misfortune, his family led a wandering life during his early years and finally settled in London around 1836. Bird learned the rules of chess at the age of 15 in Raymond's Coffee House. Two years later he visited London's chess Mecca, Simpson's Divan, for the first time. During his whole career Bird remained the archetypal coffee house player, which shone through both in his personality and in his playing



**During his whole career, Henry Edward Bird remained the archetypal coffee house player, which shone through both in his personality and in his playing style.**

style. Quite typical is the following contemporary observation: 'This game is a good specimen of Bird's vigorous, if somewhat loose, style. Careful elaboration is not a quality that he goes in for, and as long as the opponent's game be broken up, he does not seem to mind his own being in various pieces.'

In the very beginning Bird received the heaviest odds from his opponents, but he rapidly climbed the steps of chess mastery and in 1851 he took part in the first international chess tournament in London. This was a knock-out event and Bird was eliminated by the experienced Bernhard Horwitz in the first round, after a tense fight.

Serious tournament or match play would never be Bird's forte. It was in the margin of the event, at the Divan where all the foreign masters attended almost daily, that Bird made his name by scoring well against them and developing the reputation of being one of England's most promising players.

In his book *Chess History and Reminiscences* a confident Bird gave the impression that the world, or at least the Divanites, thought him ready to storm the Olympus and conquer a spot at the top of the chess world. But other priorities crossed these ambitions. His accountancy career, dramatic events in his family

circle and his marriage kept Bird away from serious chess for five years.

In 1856 Bird gave an honourable account of himself in two matches against the Austrian professional Ernst Falkbeer. He continued to attend chess events, but his main focus remained on his work as an accountant. During the summer of 1858, the American whirlwind Paul Morphy reached the shores of England. Bird happily returned from his seclusion, only to join his contemporaries in receiving a decisive beating. Bird continued to play chess leisurely after Morphy's return to the United States. From 1860 onwards, his accountancy career grew slowly but surely. Bird became a worldwide specialist in the field of railway accounting. Intense professional obligations made him abandon chess almost completely.

In 1866, not having played serious chess for over five years, Bird took on Wilhelm Steinitz in a match. Steinitz, who had been living in London since the major tournament held there in 1862, soon developed into the strongest player on British soil. Just before encountering Bird he had beaten Adolf Anderssen, recognized as the strongest active player of the day, in a match. It was thought that Bird would be easy prey, but quite unexpectedly Steinitz had the greatest problems trying to dispose of his opponent, and after 17 games he was only leading 9½-7½.

The match came to an abrupt end when Bird had to go to the United States for professional reasons and Steinitz reacted by claiming the stakes. Howard Staunton, later bitterly named 'the almighty ruler of public opinion' by Steinitz, as always took a position against foreign professionals and condemned Steinitz publicly. Steinitz's status, both among his peers and for the general public, was undermined, and in 1875 open war broke out. Several journalists attacked him incessantly, often with scathing language. Steinitz was not slow to defend himself, but he still left England in 1882. One of the people whom he always seems to have blamed for setting this process in motion was Bird.

Bird's professional high point came in 1867, when he played an important role in disclosing the dubious management of the Atlantic and Great Western Railway to its shareholders. Shortly afterwards he left the accounting firm for which he had worked for 20 years to enter into a partnership and work as an independent accountant. But then the tide turned. Within the span of a few months both his wife and his father died, and in 1870 he was declared bankrupt. Bird had been playing chess during these years, albeit not very intensively. Following his bankruptcy he disappeared completely from the chess scene for almost two years.

**'Within the span of a few months both his wife and his father died, and in 1870 he was declared bankrupt.'**

Bird's family and professional life had been wiped out, but he came back and reinvented himself. At the end of 1872, at the age of 43, Bird returned to the Divan, and his devotion to chess became a crucial element in his new life. A new image of Bird started to emerge in the chess world: 'Bird was a born Bohemian; a veritable knight-errant; the Murat of chess; a picturesque figure, unique, historic, impetuous, indomitable.'

Upon his return to serious chess, Bird found out that his opponents were well versed in the rapidly expanding opening theory, and that the effectiveness of some of his former favourites began to diminish. Popular openings like the Evans Gambit or King's Gambit had been replaced by the Ruy Lopez. Bird had been an adherent of the Lopez in his early years, when he invariably brought some dubious gambits on the board. Now, under the influence of Steinitz, the Lopez had become an opening in which White tried to accumulate small advantages. Bird condemned this strategy, writing that there were 'certainly more chivalrous debuts which a player of imagination should not be afraid to venture.'

Bird's solution was radical. He left the well-trodden paths and started looking for openings on the verge of the theory. With White he began to play 1.f4, and it didn't last long before this opening carried his name. Against the Ruy Lopez he came up with 3...♘d4. He was one of the sole players to employ the Dutch Defence or the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian. Against the French, 'which leads to the most monotonous and dullest of all games,' Bird came up with 2.♗b5.

In 1873, Bird played four matches against John Wisker, who was more or less recognized as the British champion after having won two tournaments of the British Chess Association in 1870 and 1872. By beating him narrowly, Bird found an effective short-cut to re-establishing himself as a leading player. Steinitz and Zukertort, the most outstanding foreigners active in London, were deemed to be stronger, as was Blackburne, but this didn't impress Bird one bit. One of the many typical anecdotes, penned down a few years after Bird's death by R.J. Buckley, is worth quoting to get an idea of Bird's personality. 'Said Bird, when parting with a friend very late one

night, “Boden’s a great player. He’s better than Buckle. He’s better than Morphy. He’s better than Steinitz. He’s good enough to be the world champion.” He paused a little, lost in deep thought. Resuming, he concluded with deep conviction: “And yet, if he played a match with me, he wouldn’t win a game.”’

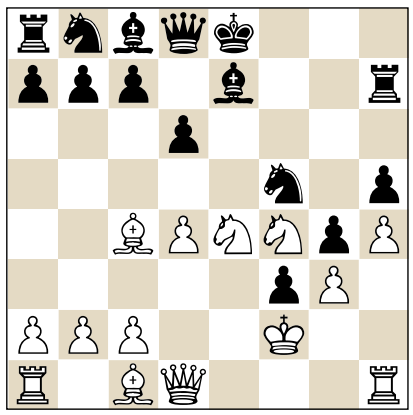
One thing that unstintingly annoyed Bird was the increasing professionalism chess was undergoing – exemplified by the size of the stakes demanded before a professional chess player would play a match with him. For his matches against Steinitz and Wisker, the stakes had been low and merely symbolic. When Bird challenged Steinitz again in 1874, the Austrian demanded a stake of at least £100 a side. Bird would rant incessantly on this subject in his books, arguing that the large sums of money influenced the quality of the games. About the 1886 World Championship between Steinitz and Zukertort, Bird wrote that the match ‘has been a disappointment to admirers of chess, on account of the sameness and dullness of the openings, the lack of originality and enterprise in the games, and the absence of well-fought contests.’

Bird himself could not be accused of playing dull games. Against one of his favourite opponents in the Divan he played one of his most famous games.

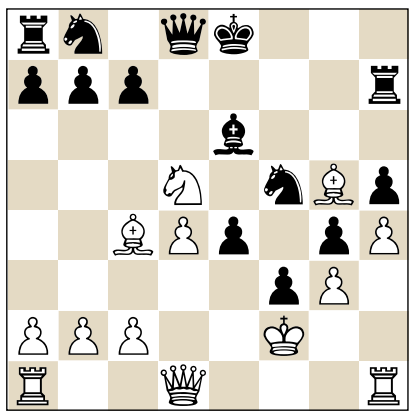
**George MacDonnell**
**Henry Bird**
London 1874
King’s Gambit

**1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘e5 h5** The Long Whip Variation, which was popular during Bird’s younger years.
**6.♗c4 ♘h6 7.d4 d6 8.♘d3 f3 9.g3** The critical move is 9.gxf3.
**9...f5 10.♘c3 fxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘f5 12.♔f2 ♗e7** Very good for Black was 12...d5 13.♗xd5 ♗g7!.
**13.♘f4 ♖h7**

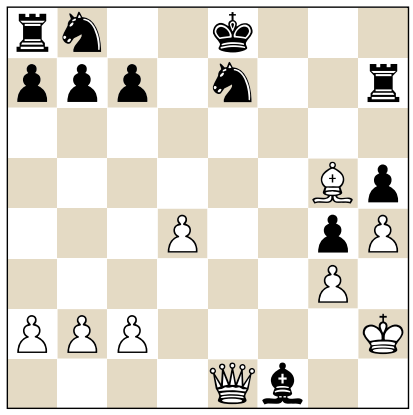
Three matadors of English chess: Henry Bird, Isidor Gunsberg (born in Hungary, he moved to Great Britain in 1876 and became a naturalized British citizen in 1908) and Joseph H. Blackburne.



**14.♘g6?** The downside of Bird’s weak last move could have been demonstrated by 14.♖e1! ♔f8 15.♘g6+ ♔g7 16.♘xe7 ♕xe7 17.♗g5.
**14...d5 15.♘xe7 dxe4 16.♘d5 ♗e6 17.♗g5**



**17...♗xd5! 18.♗xd8 e3+ 19.♔g1 ♗xc4 20.♗g5 f2+ 21.♔h2 e2 22.♕d2 f1♘+** Quite a unique position, but first 22...♘c6! and if 23.c3 f1♘+, would have avoided all complications.
**23.♖hxf1 exf1♘+ 24.♖xf1 ♗xf1 25.♕e1+ ♘e7**

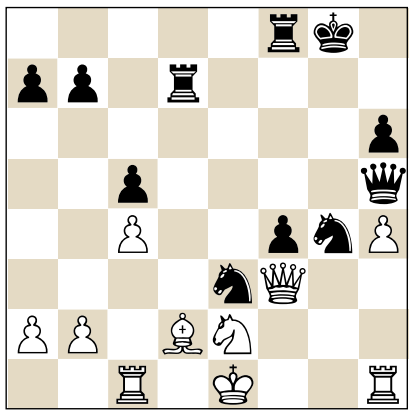


**26.♕xf1** This loses. 26.♕e4! could have drawn in elegant fashion, e.g. 26...♖f7 27.♗xe7 ♖xe7 28.♕xb7 ♗a6 29.♕xa8 ♖e2+, with a perpetual.
**26...♘bc6 27.d5 ♖f7 28.♕c4 ♘e5 29.♕xc7 ♘f3+ 30.♔g2 ♖c8 31.♕a5 ♖xc2+ 32.♔f1 ♘xg5+ 33.♔e1 ♘f3+ 34.♔d1 ♖d2+ 35.♔c1 ♘xd5 36.a3 ♖c7+ 37.♔b1 ♘c3+ 38.bxc3 ♖e7** And Black won.

At the end of 1875 Bird left for New York, probably because there were some prospects for a grand tournament coinciding with the Centennial Exhibition in the summer of 1876. What was intended as a trip of a few

months expanded to a stay of two years. For nearly a year Bird lived as a chess professional, and his presence received a lot of press attention. For the first time we get to know Bird in some more detail.

Bird's arrival was initially hailed with enthusiasm. Chess in Europe was regarded as being played at a considerably higher level than in the States, and in the person of Bird, one of its main exponents had finally deemed it worthwhile to come over and play the best Americans. Bird's steps were closely watched by the newspapers, who greeted him with headings like 'The New Chess Lion has arrived.' Admiration for Bird even increased because of his results, for instance when he brushed off Frederic Perrin, a veteran of the first American Chess Congress in 1857, in elegant fashion.



**Frederic Perrin - Henry Bird**
New York 1875
position after 28.♗d2

**28...♘e5!** and Black wins.

Bird was initially successful against James Mason, one of the best in the country, but soon some cracks in his armour started showing. The American champion, George Mackenzie, beat him 2-1 in a few offhand games (Bird's loss was explained by his unwillingness to draw), and shortly afterwards he had the greatest difficulty beating Edward Alberoni, an enigmatic French or Italian master.

At the end of the year, Bird was challenged by Mason for a set match, which he lost 11-4. This result came as a shock in Europe. Zukertort blamed Bird's loss on health problems and found the level of the games very weak. Bird challenged Mason for a rematch, but got a blunt refusal. Bird also challenged Mackenzie several times, but he also refused to play him, allegedly because Bird first had to 'restore his reputation' against Mason.

**The newspapers greeted Bird with headings like 'The New Chess Lion has arrived.'**

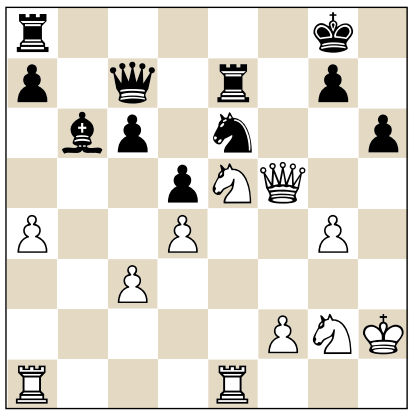
Their attitude frustrated Bird, who saw it as a sign of so-called 'American professionalism.' Bird was always open to a challenge, and, in line with his ideas of chivalry, expected the same from his opponents. Some of them, however, had other priorities than playing for honour only.

Bird now travelled to Philadelphia and played against everybody he could. But here, too, he was beaten by a few players. Bird tumbled from his pedestal as soon as he began ventilating his discontent. He complained that only games he lost were published, while he also explained the success of some of his opponents as caused by the fact that they met him at the end of the day, when he was already tired after hours of play. Once they had succeeded in beating him, they became unavailable, cherishing their win like a chicken its egg.

From March until October, Bird played in three tournaments, two of which ended in turmoil. During the first of these, played at the Café International, the hotbed of the New York chess scene, Bird began to write letters when the results of some players were scratched while others were not. Bird was now regarded by many as a grumbler and a 'man of letters', who needed to prove his point on paper instead of on the chess board.

Things got only worse for Bird at the Clipper tournament. To avoid the tournament from dragging on endlessly, it was decided that all games had to be played within a month. Bird began energetically with a series of victories, one of his victims being James Mason. However, he lost a game against one of the weakest contestants and towards the end of the four weeks, he had to find out that some players who had already met his main rivals had withdrawn from the battle field. In the end Bird finished third, behind Delmar (second) and Mason (first), as he played respectively one and two games fewer than them.

The outcome was heavily discussed in the press. Unlike before, Bird now found public opinion on his side. Bird himself didn't make a public statement. From a few preserved letters, however, it becomes clear that he did his best to win the silver cup that was going to be awarded for the most beautiful game of the tournament. This was the first brilliancy prize in chess history, and it was justly awarded to the most memorable game of Bird's heritage.

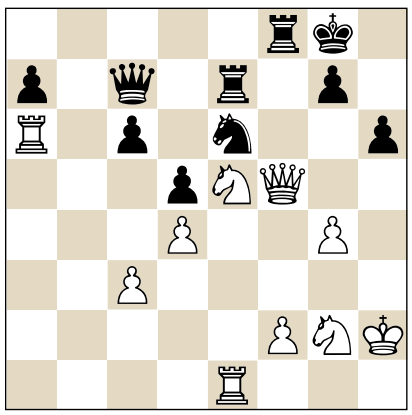


**Henry Bird - James Mason**
New York Clipper tournament 1876
position after 28...♕c7

**29.a5** From here on in, the game is a series of wonderful combinations. In

New In Chess 2016/4, page 94, Hans Ree wrote that François LeLionnais, in his book on beauty prizes, gave this move two exclamation marks, although in fact it's a losing move. But he also indicates that it took generations of players to demonstrate the resources for Black, and that only now, with the support of powerful engines, the downside of Bird's play can be demonstrated convincingly. The text-move could have been refuted by 29...♗xd4! 30.cxd4 ♘xd4 31.♕f4 ♖xe5!, and White can resign. But let us enjoy the beauty of the rest of the game.

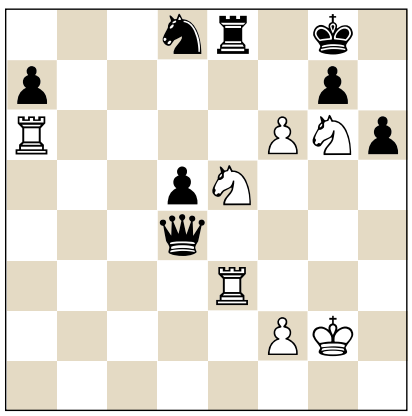
**29...♗xa5 30.♖xa5! ♖f8 31.♖a6!**



An incredible move to play. The engine recommendations are 31.♕d3 or 31.♕h5, but it is the queen sacrifice that besets Mason with dazzling problems.

**31...♖xf5 32.gxf5 ♘d8 33.♘f4 ♕c8 34.♘fg6 ♖e8 35.♘xc6! ♕c7+ 36.♘ce5 ♕xc3 37.♖e3 ♕d2** Here 37...♕c8! was the best continuation.

**38.♔g2 ♕xd4 39.f6!**



The game enters a new phase, in which Mason's king suddenly finds itself under a concerted attack by Bird's rooks and knights.

**39...gxf6 40.♖xf6 ♘e6 41.♖g3 ♘g5 42.♘g4 ♔g7** 42...♕a1!, leaving his king to its fate, still won. Bird's pieces would lose their coordination after 43.♘xh6+ ♔g7 44.♖c6 ♖e1! 45.♘f5+ ♔f7.

**43.♘f4 ♕e4+ 44.♔h2 ♘h7 45.♘h5+ ♔h8 46.♖xh6 ♕c2 47.♘hf6 ♖e7 48.♔g2 d4 49.♘e5! ♕c8 50.♘g6+ ♔g7 51.♘xe7+** And Black resigned.

The outcome of the Clipper tournament made Bird break with the professional chess circles in New York. He found a civil job, stayed in the United States until the end of 1877 and then returned to England, where he re-established himself as an accountant and relegated chess to a pastime again. He was now nearly 50 years old and, after the death of Adolf Anderssen, became the oldest active player at top level, which he would remain for 20 more years. His intense practice even made him gain strength, although his results remained rather mixed, for a variety of reasons, one of them being his weird opening repertoire, another his legendary stubbornness to avoid draws. In two tournaments, Paris 1878 and Wiesbaden 1880, in which he played 39 games, he didn't draw a single game.

Bird's most intense chess years ran from 1885 until 1890. He played in each tournament he could, but also invigorated chess life at Simpson's Divan, now more than ever London's principal chess resort. Bird was a daily visitor, organized handicap tournaments and basked in the centre of everyone's attention. His contemporaries admired his pluck and how he kept on adoring the game, even though his gout, an illness from which he already suffered as a young man, started troubling him more and more. Several testimonies enlighten us about the scenery. Here is one written by chess amateur Thomas E. Haydon, which appeared in the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* in 1892: 'There were a number of tables in the room. On the left as you entered was Mr. Bird's table, which was always a great interest to onlookers. In 1892 he was an old man, crippled and bent with rheumatism. As he played he would manoeuvre his lower set of false teeth in a most alarming fashion, while he carried on a wordy warfare with his opponent. With a constantly replenished glass of whisky and water (for which his opponent paid as a matter of course), he played a remarkably rapid and brilliant game. I have seen him in the short space of an hour take as many as ten games off a City gentleman who rather fancied himself.'

Bird scored some of his best results when he was 60 years old. In 1889 he won the tournament of the British Chess Association, which was

**Henry Bird (sitting left) on a visit to the Netherlands in 1880. Sitting in the middle is Rudolf Loman, who would later win the Dutch Championship four times.**

actually the British championship. Quite remarkably, Bird had learned to appreciate the value of draws, and he finished with five wins, five draws and no losses. In an international tournament held in Manchester in 1890, he came third, behind Tarrasch and Blackburne, defeating the latter in their direct encounter.

At the end of 1890, Bird was struck down by a serious attack of gout that made people fear for his life. But he recovered and returned to the Divan, where he would play for another decade. Admittedly, his play had suffered, but he remained a force to be reckoned with. 1892 was a mix of good and bad results. Early in the year, he disappointed in a few tournaments, but he was the only player to beat Lasker, by his excellent endgame technique – highly unusual for Bird! However, later in the year he got a severe drubbing (5-0) at the hands of Lasker, against whom he had already played a match in 1890 in Liverpool, which the 21-year-old new star had also won convincingly (+7, -2, =3). Apparently, this rout didn't affect Bird too much, since a few weeks later he played magnificent chess in Belfast. At the famous Hastings tournament of 1895 he was the best British player halfway the event, but then his failing health caught up with him. In the end, only Schlechter scored more draws than the veteran.

His infirmities no longer allowed him to travel the country, but against expectations he was allowed to take part in London 1899, which ran in the weeks preceding his 70th birthday. Bird's score strongly suggests that his time had gone, but a closer look at his games shows how resilient he still was.

Shortly after this tournament Bird was forced to withdraw from public life. When he finally died, on April 11, 1908, many people had already forgotten him. Those who did remember him soon described him in clichés, calling him an original, yet erratic and over-rated master. In his book *British Chess Masters: Past and Present*, Fred Reinfeld wrote: 'More than one generation of chess players has been familiar with Bird's reputation for originality, waywardness and even eccentricity. To moderns, this reputation is nothing more than an echo of the distant past.'

An influential historian like Kenneth Whyld even wrote that 'He [Gossip, a really weak player who more often than not finished close to last place in any tournament of any significance that he played in – HR] was probably better than Bird, who was hugely popular because of his happy nature, and is still respected.'

**'In two tournaments, Paris 1878 and Wiesbaden 1880, in which he played 39 games, Bird didn't draw a single game.'**

As a result, Tim Harding wrote in the chapter about Bird in his book *Eminent Victorian Chess Players*, that 'Research for this chapter began with the impression that Bird was something of a rogue who achieved little of substance.'

During his lifetime, Bird was viewed differently. While he belonged to the sub-top at best (he was clearly not of the level of a Steinitz, Anderssen, Zukertort or Chigorin), there was a time when his presence in the best tournaments was self-evident. He was exceedingly popular amongst chess amateurs and counted influential men amongst his admirers. The writer H.G. Wells noted: 'Compulsory quick moving is the thing for gaiety, and that is why, though we revere Steinitz and Lasker, it is Bird we love. His victories glitter, his errors are magnificent. The true sweetness of chess, if it ever can be sweet, is to see victory snatched, by some happy impertinence, out of the shadow of apparently irrevocable disaster.' In the same style, George Alcock MacDonnell wrote that 'The achievements of a Blackburne or a Bird will appeal more heartily to the real lovers of chess than all the scientific wins of the modern school, and it is very possible that ... "Bird's fancy sketches" will long outlive the results of "playing to win while keeping the draw in hand."'

Bird's so-called 'lack of success' can be attributed to several reasons: his playing style, his unwillingness to make draws, his health and his age all played a part. At the Divan, Bird was surrounded by professional chess players, who were trying to eke a meagre income from the game. Bird's unconditional love for the game, uncontaminated by the money he could generate with it, earned him veneration and a near-mythical status. Bird was a highly original player, a fact he explained as follows in his notes to a game played against Englisch: 'Change at chess is desirable for real enjoyment like change of air, so I vary my proceedings perhaps more than is consistent with prudence, my desire being to get as much beauty out of the game as I can.'

And he accepted that the originality and beauty that he pursued were often detrimental to his results: '(I)f, however, I have had less success than some other players, I have derived more amusement and real pleasure from the combinations of the game, besides which, if I am not original in chess I am nothing.' ■

*Hans Renette is the author of H.E. Bird, A Chess Biography, with 1,198 Games, published by McFarland in September 2016.*

CHESSBASE ACCOUNT PREMIUM

6 MONTHS

## CHESSBASE ACCOUNT:

Access the world of ChessBase from wherever you are 24/7!

### PLAYCHESS
The ultimate chess experience

### LIVE DATABASE
Professional research: 8 million games online

### MY GAMES CLOUD
Your one-stop cloud storage area

### FRITZ ONLINE
Your browser-based chess engine

### VIDEOS
Private Masterclasses

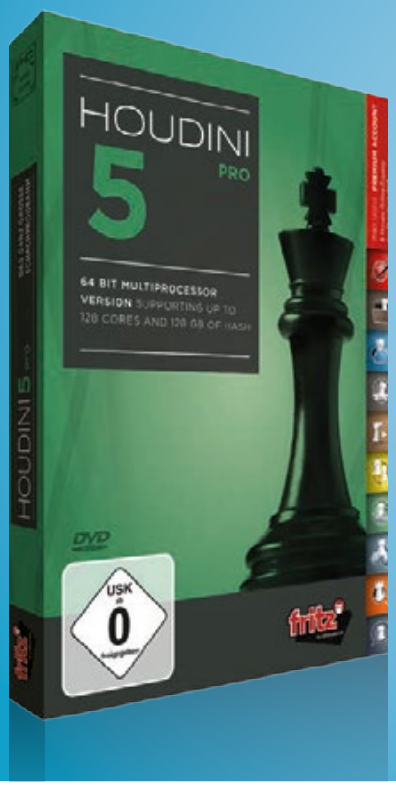
### OPENINGS
Welcome to modern opening preparation

### TRAINING
Calculate, sacrifice, mate

### ENGINE CLOUD
Top engine on the best hardware

### LET'S CHECK
Knowledge is mate: 200 million analyses

### CB NEWS
The world-renowned chess news portal




WITH NEW 200 ELO STRONGER! POWER-ENGINE

# HOUDINI 5

**The magician is back! With the latest version of his top chess program, Houdini 5, Robert Houdart has succeeded in catapulting himself back into the inner circle of computer chess, all while managing to maintain the unique and individual character of his engine.**

Its release took some time, with it now being almost three years since the appearance of its predecessor - but the wait has certainly been worth it! Houdini 5 brings a rejuvenated and reinvigorated engine to the board, weighing in at a staggering 200 Elo points stronger than Houdini 4! This represents a practically inconceivable jump in playing strength by today's standards, and one that programmer Robert Houdart was only able to achieve by implementing a range of new techniques and ideas.

A decisive factor here is the completely redesigned evaluation function, which has been retuned to better take king safety and piece play into account. Houdini's unique playing style is the result of a cunning combination of aggressive playing ideas and healthy positional and strategic understanding. What makes playing and analysing with Houdini 5 particularly exciting is the sheer plethora of ideas it comes up with – the program has all the hallmarks of unbridled creativity. Where other engines see no way to make progress, or head towards a draw, not infrequently, Houdini conjures up hidden and surprising resources!

As opposed to its predecessor, Houdini 5 is more selective when arriving at candidate moves, which enables it to reach higher search depths. This modification pays off in all stages of the game, but particularly so when it comes to the endgame. For perfect endgame play, Houdini 5 can use the Syzygy-Tablebases* (available on 4 DVDs as "Endgame Turbo 4") combined with the Nalimov Tablebases, and is thus always able to find the quickest way to mate.* Houdini 5 also uses the "lazy SMP" algorithm, meaning it is able to achieve better results on multi-processor systems than ever before. The new engine can harness the computing power of up to 128 cores simultaneously.

The preliminary release version of Houdini 5 won convincingly ahead of all other top programs in the recent "TCEC Season 9 Rapid" tournament, scoring 56 points from 62 games (50 wins and 12 draws). The final release of Houdini 5 surpasses even this performance by another 30 Elo points, making it currently the strongest program in the world.

## INCLUDED IN THE SCOPE OF SUPPLY:

- Houdini 5 Engine (Standard or Pro)
- The latest Fritz 15 program interface
- Premium membership to playchess.com and Premium for your ChessBase Account (6 months)
- Online access to the world's largest analysis database, "Let's Check", with over 200 million deeply analyzed positions (6 months)

**HOUDINI 5 STANDARD** **79,90 €**

A multiprocessor engine capable of supporting up to 6 cores and 4 GB of RAM.

**HOUDINI 5 PRO** **99,90 €**

A multiprocessor engine capable of supporting up to 128 cores and 128 GB of RAM.

The right choice for power users with high-end, high-performance hardware.

**System requirements**

**Minimum:** Minimum: Pentium III 1 GHz, 2 GB RAM, Windows 7/8, DirectX9, graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows Media Player 9 and internet access.

**Recommended:** PC Intel i5 (Quadcore), 8 GB RAM, Windows 10 or 8.1, DirectX10, graphics card with 512 MB RAM or more, 100% DirectX10-compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD-ROM drive and internet access.

* Tablebases are not included in the delivery of Houdini 5

ChessBase GmbH · News: en.chessbase.com · CB Shop: shop.chessbase.com
**CHESSBASE DEALER: NEW IN CHESS · P.O. Box 1093 · NL-1810 KB Alkmaar**
**phone (+31)72 5127137 · fax (+31)72 5158234 · WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM**

ChessBase

ALINA L'AMI

# Tough challenges till the very last moves

# **Gawain Jones** qualifies for 2018 Tata Steel Masters

It's a highly coveted ticket and you don't get it for free. Going into the last round of the Tata Steel Challengers, no fewer than four players could still qualify for next year's top group. In the end, **GAWAIN JONES** prevailed, thanks to stubborn and imaginative defending in a difficult endgame. The English winner happily shares his adventures in a chess-crazy village.

**What could go wrong for Gawain Jones? The weather in Wijk aan Zee was surprisingly good and he knew exactly how much coffee he needed before the game to get into the zone.**

This was the first time my wife Sue and I visited Wijk aan Zee, but it was not my first time to the Netherlands. I've had a mixed bag of results there, but I have always enjoyed the hospitality in this great chess country. There aren't many opportunities to play all-play-all events in the UK, so a lot of my limited experience comes from the Netherlands. A 0 out of 5 start in Groningen in 2004 and a 0 out of 3 start in the Remco Heite GM tournament in 2014 were tough at the time but invaluable learning material (the finishes were better: 2½ from 4 and 1 from 2 respectively). So I was keen to rise to the challenge. The tournament itself was the longest I have ever played, consisting of 13 rounds and three rest days. At first we didn't realise how needed those rest days would be!

The Tata Steel chess tournament isn't just about the 'top players', with many amateur events happening at the same time, whether it's politicians, school chess or club players playing in one of the many small round robins. Sue played in two of the side-events.

'Wijk aan Zee' stands out from other 'elite' tournaments, because everyone is able to play in the same room as the World Champion. Crowds squeezed themselves in tightly to watch the games live, and stayed there for the entire duration. Wijk aan Zee definitely becomes a chess village in January, with chess boards everywhere for the keen to analyse and play, and chess specials in the restaurants.

The weather was surprisingly good; not the cold, windy, wet seaside village we had been warned about. Our evenings were generally spent with other Anglophones. Over lengthy dinners we had many hours of conversation with fellow 'B-Group' competitors Nils Grandelius and Eric Hansen, commentator Yasser Seirawan, and our friends from New Zealand, Bill and Maria Forster.

Players relax differently. Nils decided to fill in any small gaps in his chess culture by reading old issues of New In Chess from the 1980s. We, on the other hand, chose to watch episodes of the BBC series *Sherlock* to take our minds off the chess.

Some players brought seconds, some wives; some brought children along and others had brought their parents. Everyone needs support for such a long event. Routine is so important, especially for a chess player. I think this is one of the reasons the quality of last rounds is often much lower. The games are often played many hours earlier than normal, totally throwing off the players' body clocks (here the last round started at

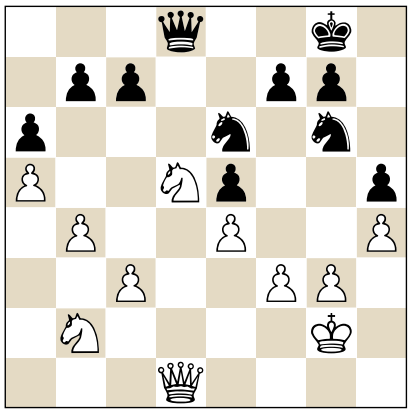
# Playing through this, you can see the effect of over two weeks of chess combined with nerves!

noon, one-and-a-half hours earlier than the other rounds). We were at breakfast 'early' at 10 a.m. most days, and after that would spend a couple of hours preparing before a shower and heading to the game. On the rest days, I went for a run on the beach with Nils. Though it would have been nice to exercise during playing days, it's nearly impossible to find the time and it's important not to exhaust yourself before play.

Nils and I also share an addiction to coffee. Nils told us that coffee should be thick and strong, ideally so thick that a spoon would stand upright. Most chess players know what they need before the game to get into the zone, and Nils and I definitely need coffee to function.

Obviously, to triumph in such a tournament you need luck and I had my fortunate moments, especially in the crucial last round. Sometimes people say you create your own luck, and I think that may be true.

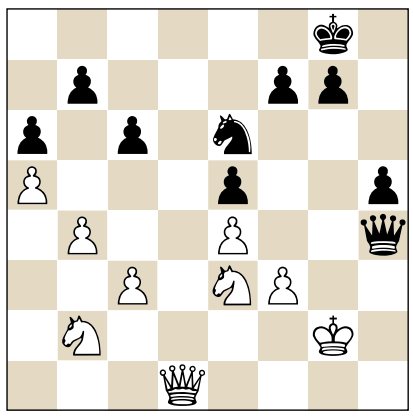
**Lu Shanglei**
**Gawain Jones**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (13)



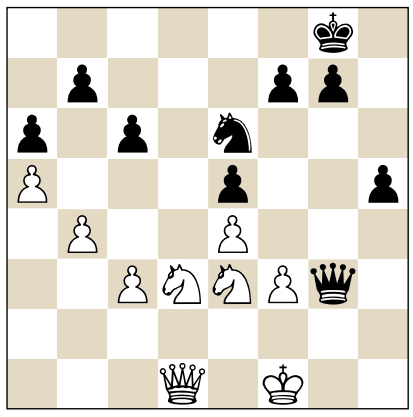
position after 37.♘b2

Playing through this, you can see the effect of over two weeks of chess combined with nerves! By this point I knew a draw was enough.

**37...c6?!** I decided that taking the initiative was an easier route to the draw than a little suffering.
37...♘e7 was the more professional way to make a draw. White is a little better with his extra space and my potentially weak b7-pawn, but Black is very solid.
**38.♘e3 ♘xh4+!?** 38...♕xd1 39.♘bxd1 ♔f8 might be better, but my position does have a lot of holes and I will be forced to suffer indefinitely.
**39.gxh4 ♕xh4**

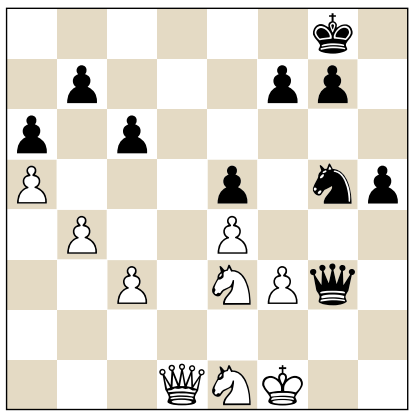


For the piece I have two pawns, a strong outpost on f4 and some initiative against White's king. I thought that my h-pawn might also be tough to stop. With a better queenside structure, Black would probably have been fine, but here my b7-pawn is just too weak.
**40.♘d3 ♕g5+ 41.♔f2 ♕h4+ 42.♔g1 ♕g3+ 43.♔f1**

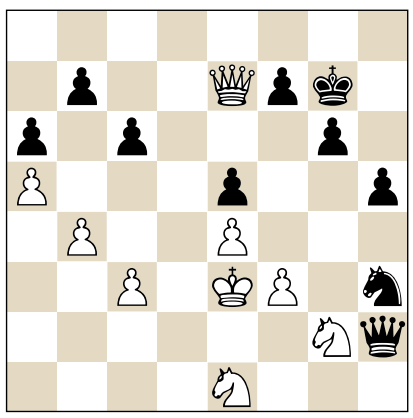


**43...♘g5?!** This endgame is very difficult to play and the engine laughs at our attempts.

I should have continued checking the king away: 43...♕h3+ 44.♔e2 ♕h2+ 45.♔e1 ♕g3+ 46.♔d2 ♘g5 47.♘e1 h4, when White is of course better, but Black has reasonable counterplay.
**44.♘e1?**
44.♕e2! was very strong. It transpires that after 44...♘xf3 45.♕g2! Black has to exchange queens: 45...♕xg2+ 46.♔xg2 ♘g5 47.♘c5. Now Black's queenside drops far too quickly for the kingside pawns to have any effect.

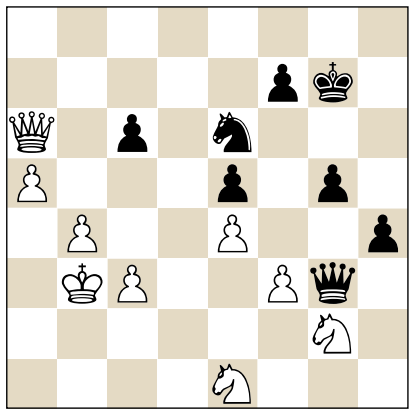


**44...♘h3?!** A complete oversight.
44...♘xe4 was what I had analysed back when I decided to give the piece. After 45.fxe4 ♕xe3 my three pawns would indeed have given me full compensation for the piece.
**45.♕d2** Oops. Had missed this was legal. Now I only have two pawns for the piece. I still hoped to have decent compensation, as rook pawns are hard to stop with knights.
**45...♕g1+ 46.♔e2 g6** I need a safe square for my king. 46...♔h7 was better, as then e5 isn't falling with check.
**47.♘3g2 ♔g7 48.♕d6 ♕h2** My queen is offside here and gets in the way of attempts to promote my h-pawn.
48...♕f2+ 49.♔d1 ♕g3 was better.
**49.♕e7 ♘f4+ 50.♔f2 ♘h3+ 51.♔e3**

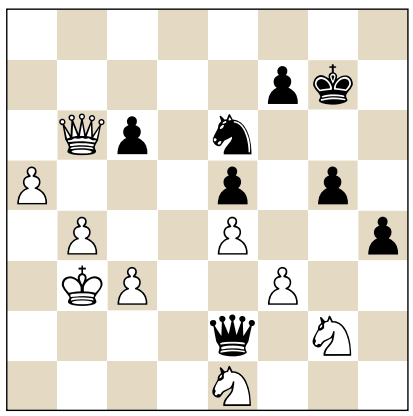


**In a thrilling last-round game against Lu Shanglei, Gawain Jones created his own luck to reach the draw he needed to win the Tata Steel Challengers.**

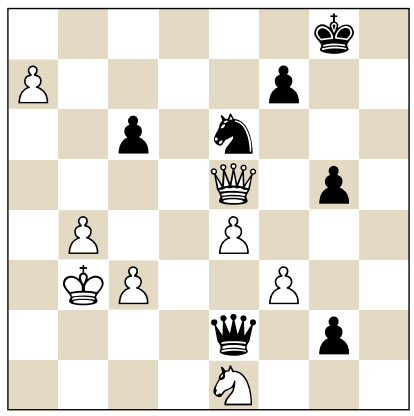
**51...g5** I really didn't want to weaken the f5-square, but couldn't see how else to get counterplay.
**52.♔d3 ♘f4+ 53.♔c4?**
53.♘xf4 ♕xf4 was what I had been expecting. Then 54.♘g2! ♕xf3+ 55.♘e3 looked very scary. I hoped I would survive with 55...♕g3, but White's winning after 56.♕xb7 h4 57.♕c8 h3 58.♕g4.
**53...♘e6 54.♔b3 ♕g3?!** Again the queen's on the wrong circuit. I rejected 54...♕g1! because of 55.♕d6, but it turns out I can sacrifice the e-pawn with 55...h4, when the h-pawn is strong enough to force the draw.
**55.♕xb7 h4 56.♕xa6**



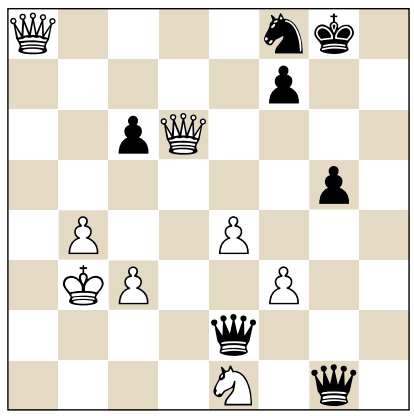
**56...♕f2** My only chance is queening my h-pawn, so I can't allow White's queen back. 56...h3 57.♕f1! is hopeless. **57.♕b6 ♕e2?** 57...♕f1! should draw.



**58.♕b8?** The final mistake of the game. Lu could have exploited my last move with 58.♕e3!. I was planning to meet this with 58...♕d1+ 59.♔b2 h3, but had missed the computer defence of 60.♕f2! h2 (60...hxg2 61.♘xg2 still forces White to show technique, but he should be able to shepherd his a-pawn home) 61.♘e3!.
**58...h3 59.♕xe5+ ♔g8 60.a6 hxg2 61.a7**



**61...♕d1+!**
An important check, and judging from his body language, the move Lu had overlooked.
The immediate 61...g1♕? loses: 62.a8♕+ ♘f8 63.♕d6!.

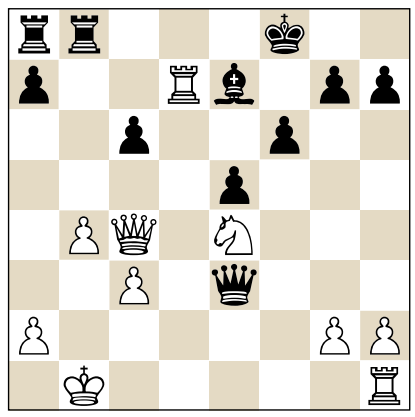


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Despite having two queens Black can neither give check, nor defend the f8-knight. You can see it's important to cover the d6-square.
**62.♔c4 ♕e2+ 63.♔b3**
63.♘d3?? ♕a2 mate.
**63...♕d1+ 64.♔c4 ♕e2+**
Draw.

The day before the last round I had won an important game against Vladimir Dobrov with a nice finish.

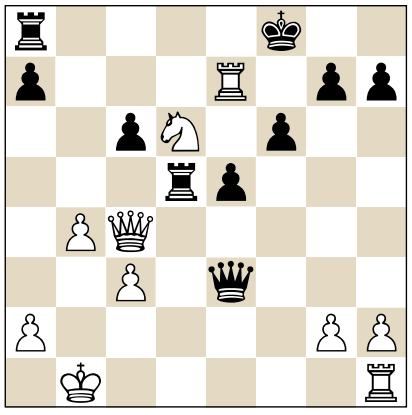
**Gawain Jones**
**Vladimir Dobrov**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (12)



position after 23.♔b1

An interesting lawn-mower theme. Dobrov tried
**23...♖b5?**
to cover with his rook. 23...♕h6 or 23...♕f4 had to be tried.

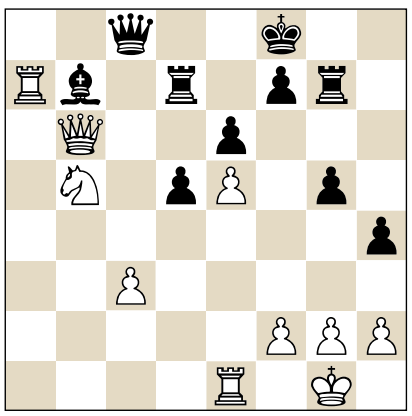
**24.♘d6 ♖d5 25.♖xe7!**



Both pieces are poisoned. **25...♖d8 26.♖f7+ ♔g8 27.♖xg7+!** And again. **27...♔h8 28.♖g3** 1-0.

In the early rounds, I had two remarkable consecutive games. I can't remember the last time I had two games in a row that finished in mate. First of all there was my Round 2 game against Sopiko Guramishvili. The finish here wasn't too difficult.

**Gawain Jones**
**Sopiko Guramishvili**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (2)

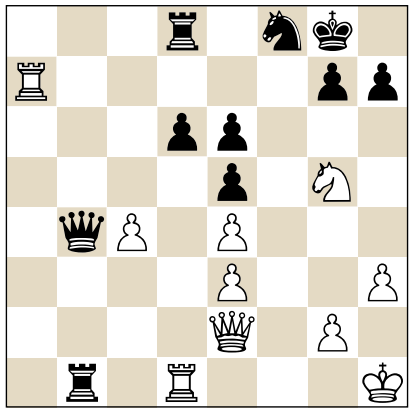


position after 31...♖d7

**32.♘d6 ♕xc3 33.♖a8+! ♗xa8 34.♕b8+ ♔e7 35.♕e8**
Mate.

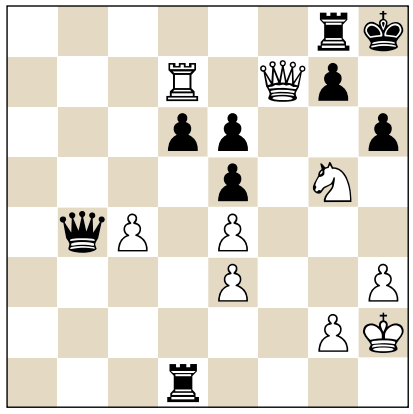
The next round I was playing Ilya Smirin. My sense of danger had deserted me at a critical juncture.

**Ilya Smirin**
**Gawain Jones**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (3)



position after 30...♖a7

Here, short on time I played
**30...h6?**
and thought everything was under control.
**31.♕f3!**
Smirin is such a creative and dangerous player. He doesn't miss the tactical shot. 31.♘f7 ♖d7 32.♖xd7 ♘xd7 33.♘xd6 ♘c5 was what I had been expecting, when I thought I should hold.
**31...♖xd1+ 32.♔h2!**
Despite the extra rook there's no defence.
**32...♘d7 33.♕f7+ ♔h8 34.♖xd7 ♖g8**



**35.♕xg8+! ♔xg8 36.♖d8**
Mate.

The tournament itself was wide open, and several players could easily have taken first place. Markus Ragger came out storming with 4/4, including an important win in the first round over the American prodigy Jeffery Xiong.

Jeffery is just 16, but is already close to 2700, and will surely soon be competing in the elite events. He was leading with two rounds to go. Jeffery played some great positional chess and is one to look out for in the future.

To appreciate how closely fought it was, just look at the number of decisive games between players in the top half of the cross table. Ilya Smirin finished in sixth, but had he won his final round, he would have won the event.

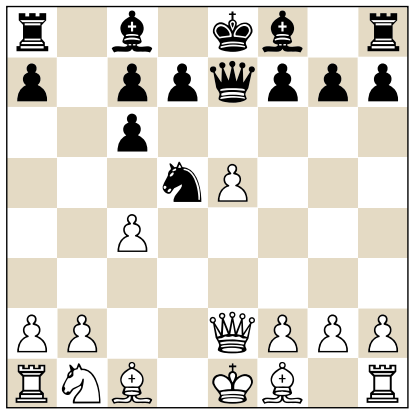
Looking back, it turned out that the crucial game of the 2017 Tata Challengers had been played in Round 6, when I faced Markus Ragger.

NOTES BY
**Gawain Jones**

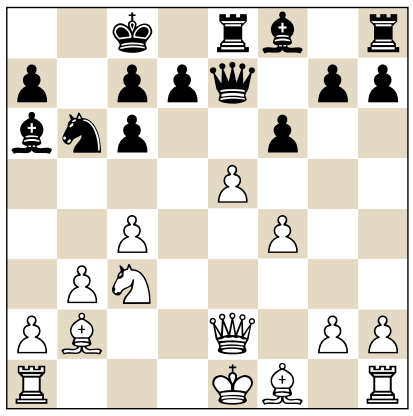
**Gawain Jones**
**Markus Ragger**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (6)
Scotch Game

At this point, Markus was a point ahead on 4½/5, but as we were still in the first half of the event I thought it unnecessary to go 'all-out' and stuck to the pre-tournament strategy. In the end I edged it over Markus on the head-to-head tiebreak after we both scored 9/13.

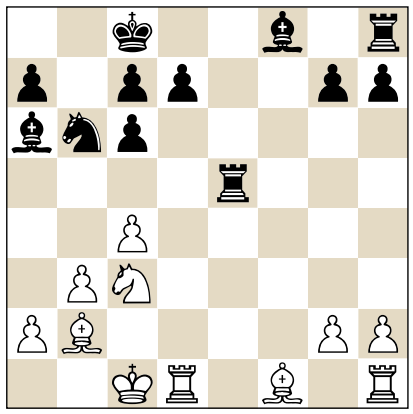
**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4**



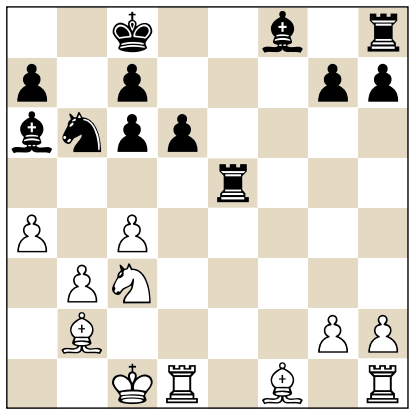
**8...♘b6** It was hard to predict which line Markus might opt for.
We had been up to here before. In the World Juniors in 2007, Markus chose 8...♗a6 9.b3 g6 10.g3 ♗g7 11.♗b2 0-0 12.♘d2?! (an attempt to avoid the two-pieces-for-rook ending) 12...♖ae8 (Jan Smeets later improved with 12...d6, which probably simply refutes the line. After 13.♕e4?! I was lucky Jan missed 13...♗xe5! 14.♗xe5 f5!, when Black has a fantastic position) 13.0-0-0 ♘b6 14.f4 d5 15.♕f2 f6 16.e6 f5 17.c5 ♗xf1 18.♖hxf1 ♗xb2+ 19.♔xb2 ♕f6+ 20.♔c2 ♘c8 21.♘f3 ♖xe6 22.♘e5 and, like in the game, I had good positional compensation for the pawn.
**9.♘c3 ♗a6** This line has become reasonably popular, as White's been struggling to prove anything.
**10.b3**
This is in effect a pawn sacrifice, since White doesn't have enough time to adequately defend the e5-pawn.
10.♕e4 is the other main line. Here Black can choose to transpose back to the 9...♕e6 lines with 10...♕e6, but can also play independently. 10...f6 was tried by Karjakin and Adams, while Svidler has played 10...g6.
**10...0-0-0 11.♗b2 ♖e8 12.f4 f6**



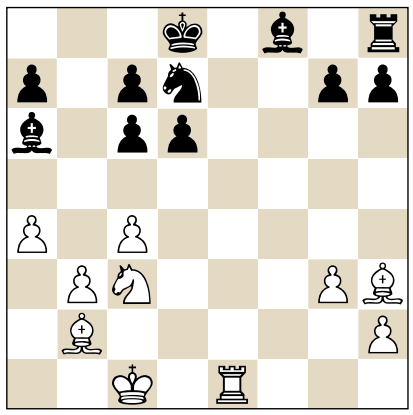
**13.0-0-0** Attempting to defend the pawn with 13.♘e4?! costs White too much time. After 13...fxe5 14.fxe5 d5 15.♘d2 g6 16.0-0-0 ♗g7 Black's development has been accelerated and the pawn will still drop.
**13...fxe5 14.fxe5 ♕xe5 15.♕xe5 ♖xe5** Kramnik, Eljanov and Karjakin have all played this position with Black with a huge 2½/3. Karjakin even switched sides after getting nowhere against Kramnik.



**16.a4!?** This was my fresher approach. Markus had blitzed up to this point, but now thought for around 45 minutes, always a positive sign.
16.♗d3 had been played in most of the preceding games. Black seems to be OK wherever he puts the rook, but 16...♖e3 is normal.
**16...d6**
Logical. Black wants to move his rook away from the 5th rank without allowing his knight to be entombed on a8.



**17.g3** I couldn't remember any more of my preparation, but this seemed sensible. The bishop has good prospects on both g2 and h3. White has decent compensation for the pawn with the better structure, while Black struggles to coordinate his pieces.
**17...♖e8 18.♗h3+ ♘d7**
18...♔d8 19.♗g2 ♗b7 20.♘e4 starts to be quite awkward for Black, since he can't deal satisfactorily with the pins.
**19.♖he1** Exchanging off Black's only active piece.
**19...♖xe1 20.♖xe1 ♔d8**

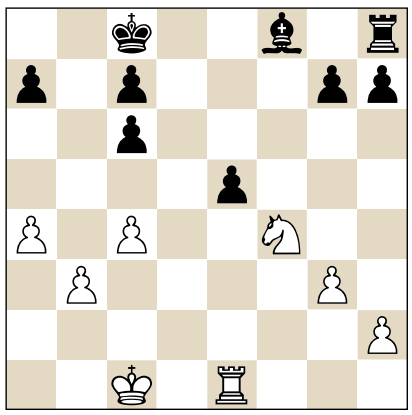


**21.♘e2** I'd used up quite a chunk of my extra time after this move.
21.♘e4 is, of course, more logical, and the move I wanted to play. However, after 21...h6 I wasn't sure where my knight was going. Stockfish informs me I'd have a small edge here by simply sitting on the position, as Black really struggles to complete development. I thought that at least from e2 I'd have the c6- and e6-squares in sight.
**21...♘e5** 21...♘c5 was a simpler defence. 22.♔c2 ♗c8 23.♗xc8 ♔xc8

24.♘f4 ♔d7. Here Black has managed to exchange bishops without additional concessions.

During the game I thought I should always have full compensation, since I can at least exchange on c5 when Black's extra pawn is meaningless, but Black should also be completely fine.

**22.♘f4 ♗c8 23.♗xc8 ♔xc8 24.♗xe5 dxe5**

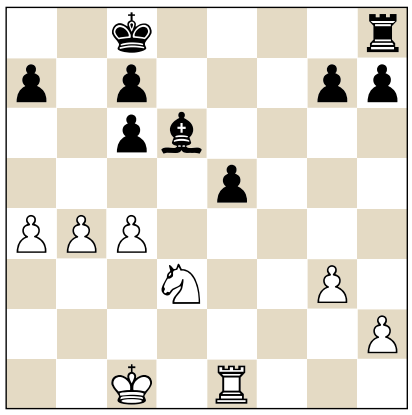


**25.♘d3!**

Continuing my strategy of depriving Black of activity. I thought I should keep my knight, as the rook and pawn ending should be very drawish.

**25...♗d6 26.b4**

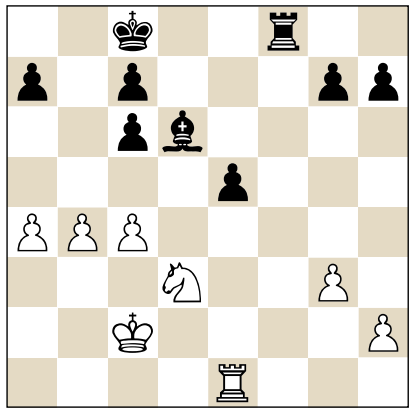
Improving my position as much as possible before grabbing the e5-pawn.



**26...♖f8**

Disrupting my queenside with 26...a5!? should definitely have been considered: 27.c5 (27.bxa5 c5 28.♔d2 ♖e8 also looks OK for Black) 27...♗e7 28.♘xe5 ♖e8! (I think we both missed this during the game. I only looked at 28...axb4?, when 29.♘f7! ♖e8 30.♔c2 wins, as the pin is too awkward) 29.♔c2 ♗f6 30.♘d3 ♖xe1 31.♘xe1 axb4 32.♔b3 ♗c3. I can't imagine anyone wanting to go into this position, but it seems to draw, since I can't utilise my passed a-pawn in the king-and-pawn endings.

**27.♔c2**



**27...a6**

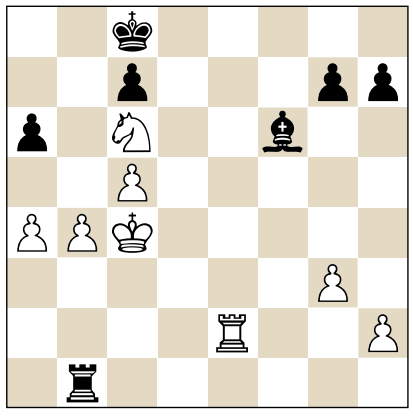
With time running low I was a bit worried by the piece sacrifice 27...a5 28.c5 axb4!? 29.cxd6 cxd6 30.♘xb4 ♖f2+. For the first time in the game,

Black would have some activity and those three connected passed pawns in the centre might start rolling. I decided that my a-pawn would give Black enough grief, so that White must be considerably better.

**28.♖e2 ♖f1 29.c5 ♗e7 30.♘xe5 ♗f6 31.♘xc6 ♖a1**

Now White has the extra pawn, but Black has managed to activate his pieces.

**32.♔b3 ♖b1+ 33.♔c4**

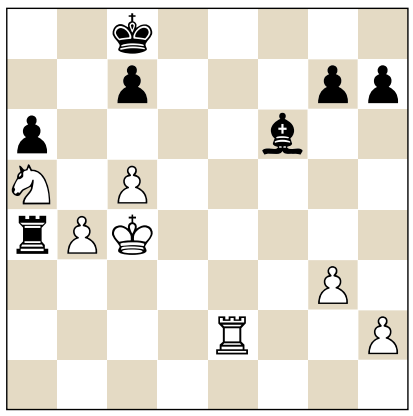


**33...♖a1 34.♘a5**

My instinct to give up the a-pawn was correct.

However, 34.♔d5!? was probably even stronger: 34...♖xa4?! (this doesn't work, but then White is obviously doing very well) 35.♖e8+ ♔d7 (35...♔b7 36.♖b8 mate) 36.♖a8 ♖a1 37.♘b8+ ♔e7 38.♘xa6. Black's queenside falls, resulting in an easy victory.

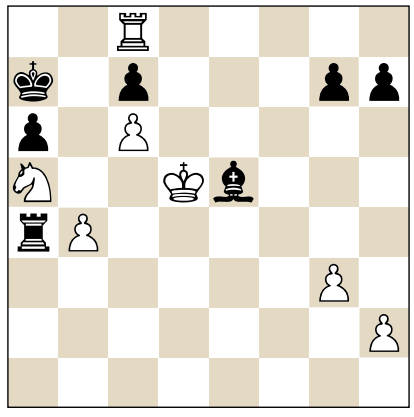
**34...♖xa4**



**35.g4?**

Running short on time and unable to calculate a win, I throw away most of my advantage.

35.c6! was the logical continuation and is simply winning: 35...♔b8 36.♖e8+ ♔a7 37.♖c8 ♗e5 (37...♔b6 38.♖b8+ ♔a7 39.♖b7+) 38.♔d5, and now:

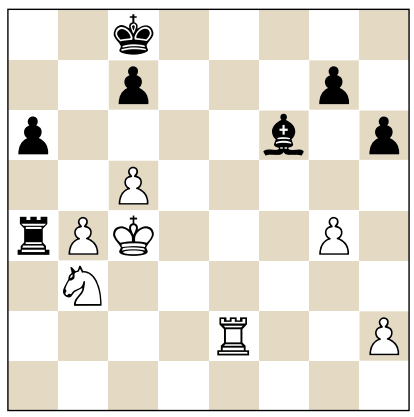


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– 38...♖xb4. Here I missed the strong 39.♘c4!, when Black can't hold onto the c-pawn. I saw this after I had played 35.g4, but by then it was too late, as the bishop is given additional squares along the h2-b8 diagonal.

– 38...♗d6 39.♘c4 ♖xb4 40.♘xd6 cxd6 41.c7!. Black's rook is on the worst square and will be unable to stop the c-pawn. I think I saw this, but my analysis was starting to get muddled.

**35...h6 36.♘b3**



**36...♔d7??**

Luckily for me, Markus returns the favour almost immediately.

After 36...♖a3 37.h3 ♔d7 38.♖d2+ I would still have had the more pleasant position, but it's long way from winning.

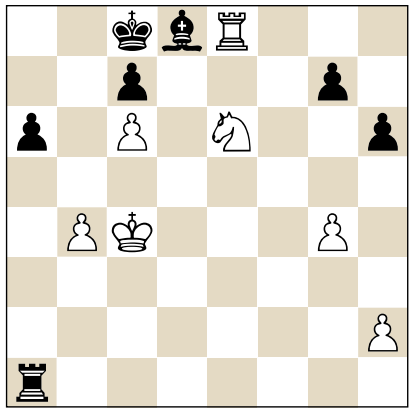
**37.c6+!**

Gaining an important tempo for the attack, as Black's king can't get to b8.

**37...♔c8**

37...♔xc6 38.♖e6+ ♔d7 39.♘c5+ picks up the rook.

**38.♘c5 ♖a1 39.♖e8+ ♗d8 40.♘e6**



As Yasser Seirawan put it, Black's in an eternal pin. White can choose to go into a winning rook-and-pawn ending whenever he likes.

**40...♖d1 41.h4 g6 42.♔b3 ♖d2 43.♖g8**

I convinced myself that there were absolutely no technical problems converting the rook-and-pawn ending.

**43...h5 44.g5 ♖d6 45.♘xd8 ♖xd8 46.♖xg6 ♔b8 47.♖h6 ♔a7 48.♖xh5 ♖d3+ 49.♔c4 ♖g3 50.♔c5**

Black resigned.

Overall, we had a very positive experience in Wijk aan Zee and loved the intense chess atmosphere. We were treated very well and considerate touches, such as leaving breakfast open until midday, show that the organisers understand chess players. The only negative point was during Round 10, when the Masters had one of their travel days and the Challengers had the playing hall to themselves. I had a very long game, and at some point they turned off the heating, forcing me to drink lots of tea and wear my coat. Fortunately, that is unlikely to be a problem next year, when I will be playing in the Masters!

■ ■ ■

We round off this report of the 2017 Tata Steel Challengers with two special games. To begin with, a flashy win by Austria's Markus Ragger, who reached the same final score as Gawain Jones and had to settle for second place on tiebreak. And finally, a highly unusual win by Chessbrah Eric Hansen. It doesn't happen very often that you defeat a fellow grandmaster in 20 moves. With Black.

NOTES BY
**Markus Ragger**

**Markus Ragger**
**Eric Hansen**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (3)
Ruy Lopez, Closed

The Tata Steel tournament has such a rich tradition and is connected to chess history like no other tournament. I was very excited and nervous when I reached Wijk aan Zee, but the start of the tournament literally couldn't have been better, 4 out of 4. The following game was played in Round 3.

**1.e4**

I hadn't played too many 1.e4 games in the last few years. It was my main move in my youth, and for this special occasion I decided to give it a try again and opened all my White games in Wijk aan Zee with it. With 5½/7 to show for it, it obviously worked very well.

**1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6**

GM Hansen spent some time over his first few moves, trying to get me out of my preparation.

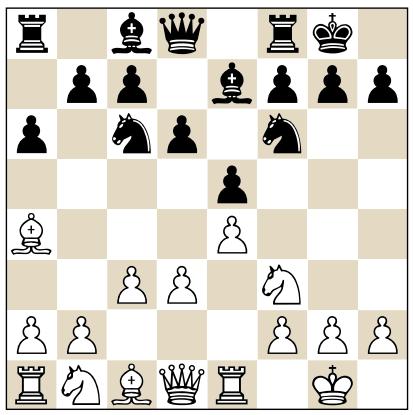
3...a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 d6 7.c3 0-0 8.♖e1 is a more common way to reach the position in the game.

**4.d3 d6**

4...♗c5 is the move that top players are playing almost exclusively these days.

**5.c3 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♖e1 a6 8.♗a4**

With many subtle move orders we have transposed from an Anti-Berlin back to a Ruy Lopez with 6.d3.



**8...♘d7**

8...b5 is by far the main move, which I have played a couple of times as Black.

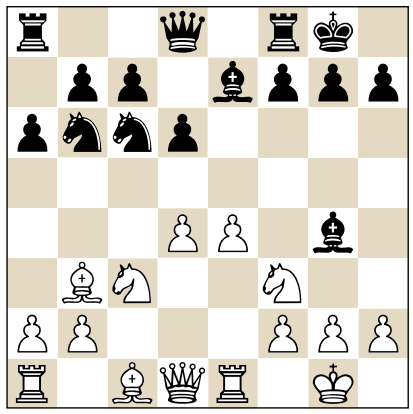
**9.d4 exd4!?**

Black decides to immediately attack White's centre and fight for the initiative.

9...♗f6 gives White time to consolidate his centre with 10.h3.

**10.cxd4 ♘b6 11.♗b3 ♗g4 12.♘c3!**

White doesn't mind the potentially doubled f-pawns, as long as his centre stays intact.

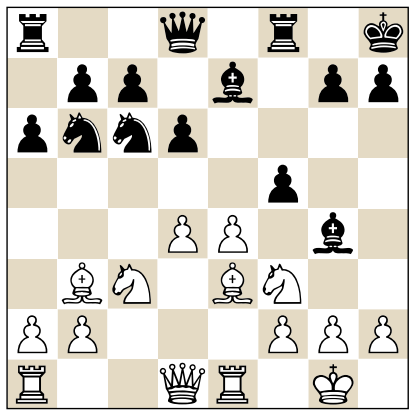


**12...♔h8!?**

With the idea to tackle White's centre with ...f5; a very double-edged idea, because it weakens many light squares.

The concrete approach, which I had expected, is 12...♗f6, and now 13.♗e3 ♘a5 (after 13...♗xf3 14.gxf3 the doubled pawns don't concern White too much. He gets a nice centre, the bishop pair and a half open g-file in return) 14.♗c2 ♘ac4 15.♗c1 g6! leads to a complex position with roughly equal chances, although I would still prefer White (the principled move 15...c5? has a tactical flaw: 16.e5! dxe5 17.♕d3! g6 18.dxc5 and Black loses a piece).

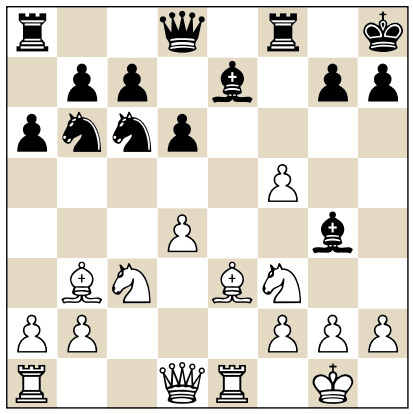
**13.♗e3 f5**



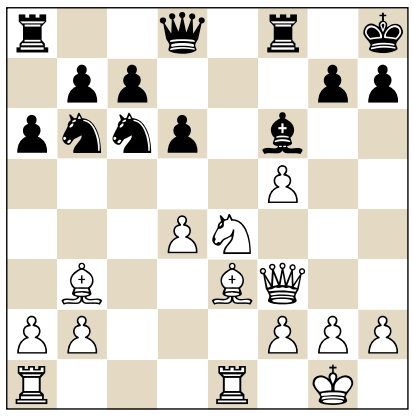
**Wijk aan Zee 2017 – Challengers** — **cat. XIV**

| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | | TPR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gawain Jones | IGM | ENG | 2665 | * | 1 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 0 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 9 | 2728 |
| 2 | Markus Ragger | IGM | AUT | 2697 | 0 | * | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 2725 |
| 3 | Jeffery Xiong | IGM | USA | 2667 | 1 | 0 | * | 0 | ½ | 1 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8½ | 2697 |
| 4 | Eric Hansen | IGM | CAN | 2603 | 0 | 0 | 1 | * | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 8 | 2678 |
| 5 | Lu Shanglei | IGM | CHN | 2612 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | * | 0 | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 8 | 2678 |
| 6 | Ilya Smirin | IGM | ISR | 2667 | 1 | ½ | 0 | 0 | 1 | * | 0 | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2674 |
| 7 | Aryan Tari | IGM | NOR | 2584 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | 0 | 1 | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1 | 7½ | 2650 |
| 8 | Erwin l'Ami | IGM | NED | 2605 | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2620 |
| 9 | Nils Grandelius | IGM | SWE | 2642 | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2617 |
| 10 | Benjamin Bok | IGM | NED | 2608 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | 0 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 5½ | 2534 |
| 11 | Vladimir Dobrov | IGM | RUS | 2499 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1 | * | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4½ | 2489 |
| 12 | Jorden van Foreest | IGM | NED | 2612 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 1 | * | 0 | ½ | 4 | 2450 |
| 13 | Tingjie Lei | WGM | CHN | 2467 | ½ | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | * | 1 | 3½ | 2427 |
| 14 | Sopiko Guramishvili | IM | GEO | 2370 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | 0 | * | 1½ | 2273 |

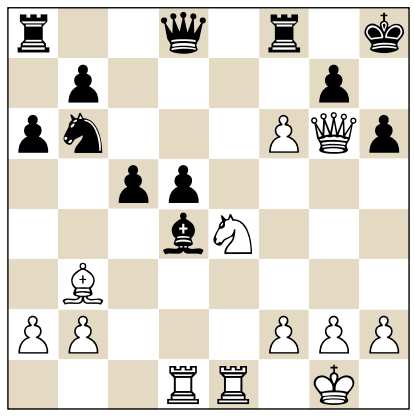
**14.exf5!**
Bad is 14.h3? ♗xf3! 15.♕xf3 f4!, and Black wins an important central pawn.
And the same goes for 14.♗e6? ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 f4!.



**14...♗f6**
White is clearly better after 14...♖xf5 15.♗e6! ♖xf3 16.♗xg4 ♖f8 17.d5 ♘e5 18.♗e6 or 14...♗xf5 15.d5! ♘e5 16.♘d4.
By far the best move was 14...d5!, when Black keeps control of the light squares: 15.h3 ♗xf5 16.♘e5 ♘a5 17.♗c2 ♗xc2 18.♕xc2 ♘ac4 19.♖ad1, with only a minimal advantage for White.
**15.♘e4**
15.♗e6!? was another good option, as White protects f5 and keeps control of the light squares.
**15...♗xf3 16.♕xf3**
White returns the pawn and gets a big attack on the kingside in exchange.



**16...♘xd4**
After 16...♗xd4 17.♘g5 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3, Black cannot protect against the threats ♘xh7 and ♘f7+.
**17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♖ad1 c5**
Trying to keep the d-file closed and dreaming of shutting down the bishop with ...d5.
18...♗xb2 runs into 19.♘c5!.
**19.♕h5**
Threatening ♘g5.
**19...h6 20.♕g6 d5**
Black had to take care of his d-pawn.
**21.f6!**
Opening the b1-h7 diagonal. The ♗c2 blooms with devastating effect.

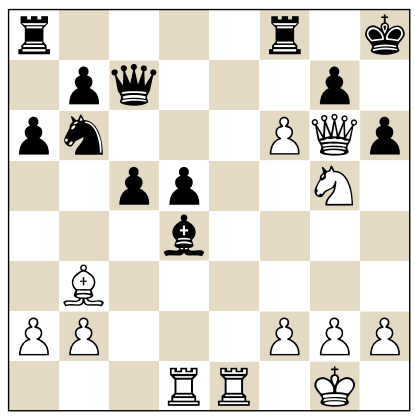


**21...♕c7**
Black is also lost after 21...♗xf6 22.♘g5 ♗xg5 23.♗c2 ♔g8 24.♕h7+ ♔f7 25.♗g6+ ♔f6 26.♗h5, or 21...gxf6 22.♕xh6+ ♔g8 23.♕g6+ ♔h8 24.♖d3, with the idea of ♖h3+.

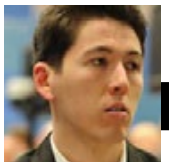
ALINA L'AMI

**Markus Ragger had a furious start, winning his first four games. The Austrian GM returned to his old love 1.e4 and didn't regret his decision.**

**22.♘g5!**
Besides the obvious mate on h7, White is also threatening ♖e7.



**22...gxf6**
22...♗xf2+ is a cute tactic, which shouldn't worry White too much: 23.♔f1 hxg5 (23...gxf6 24.♕xh6+ ♔g8 25.♘e6 winning) 24.♖e7!, and curtains.
**23.♕xh6+ ♔g8 24.♘e6**
Black resigned in view of 24...♕h7 25.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 26.♘xf8+ ♖xf8 27.♖e7+ ♔h6 28.♖xb7, or 24...♕f7 25.♖d3 and ♖g3 or ♖h3, mate, will follow soon, and White wins the endgame without any problems.

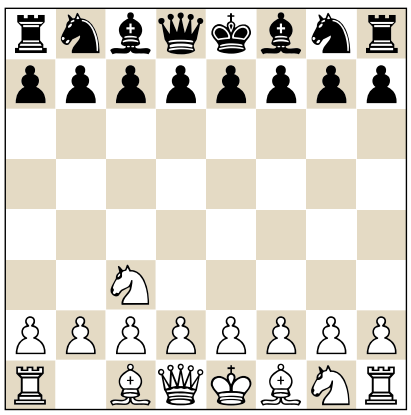


NOTES BY
**Eric Hansen**

**Lu Shanglei**
**Eric Hansen**
Wijk aan Zee 2017 (10)
Van Geet Opening

After coming off of a clean win against Dobrov the previous day and moving to +2, I was back in tournament contention with four rounds to go. Even though holding with Black in this game would be a good strategy, I knew that my opponent was likely to go hyper-aggressive no matter what.

**1.♘c3**



There goes my preparation! Actually, Lu has played 1.♘c3 before, but I didn't expect him to play it in a preparation-intensive tournament like Tata Steel.

**1...d5** Played after a 20-minute think. I've never faced this variation before, so I tried to think of all the potential transpositions

1...c5 would have made more sense, since I had prepared the Sicilian for this game. I couldn't figure out if I would be able to achieve it, though: 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 d6 5.♗g5 e6. I considered this position and figured that after 6.♕d2 it's pretty weird.

Some quick research shows that Lu was on the black side of this ultra-rare position early on in his career: 6.g3 ♗e7 7.♗g2 h6 8.♗xf6 ♗xf6 9.0-0 a6 10.e3 0-0 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.c4 ♘c6, and Black was doing fine in this equal position from Predke-Lu Shanglei, Moscow 2010.

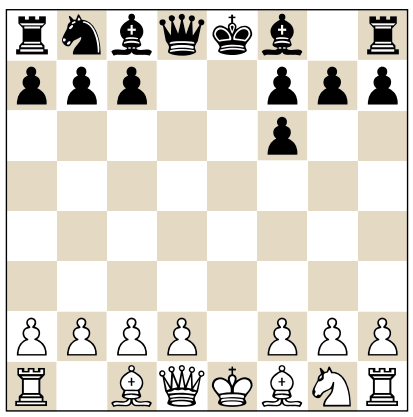
1...e5 2.e4 would transpose to the Vienna, which is one of his pet lines.

**2.e4** 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗g5 would lead to the Veresov Attack.

**2...dxe4**

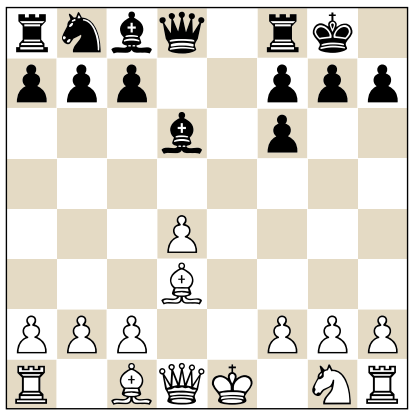
In my only previous game here I opted for the more principled 2...d4 3.♘ce2 e5 4.♘g3 ♗e6, achieving a pretty decent position, but I didn't feel like repeating the experience.

**3.♘xe4 ♘f6 4.♘xf6+ exf6**



I went for this, because I figured I could be a tempo up on the Kortchnoi Variation in the Caro-Kann (5...exf6) in some lines in which I don't end up playing ...c6.

**5.d4 ♗d6 6.♗d3 0-0**



**7.c3**

7.♘e2 ♘c6 8.c3 was seen in a blitz game, Topalov-Kramnik, Norway Chess Blitz 2014, but it could also lead to a transposition. I like the set-up with ...c5 first and then ...♘c6 more, since it puts more pressure on d4.

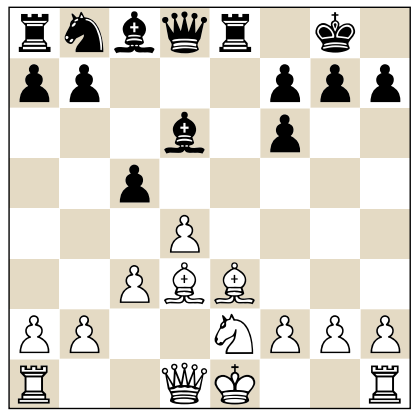
**7...♖e8+**

7...c5 leads to an equal game after 8.♘e2 (Black has compensation for the pawn after 8.dxc5 ♗xc5 9.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 10.♕h5+ ♔g8 11.♕xc5 b6) 8...♘c6 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.0-0.

**8.♘e2 c5 9.♗e3**

A pretty ambitious move that signals White's intentions. You normally wouldn't want your bishop on e3 and in the way of things, unless you're making room to castle.

I'm guessing my opponent didn't fancy 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.0-0 ♘c6, with approximate equality. White has a queenside majority, but Black will enjoy very active pieces and better development as compensation.



**9...♘d7**

I picked this move for its flexibility. In some lines I can go ...g6 and ...f5, followed by ...♘f6, while in other lines I can consider moving the knight to the queenside.

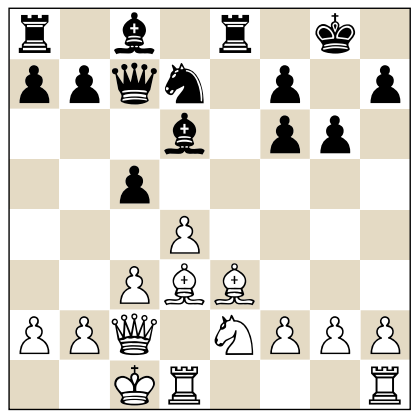
Alternatively, 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♗f4 also seems totally playable.

**10.♕c2**

It still wasn't too late to backtrack and stay safe with 10.0-0 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘e5 12.♗e2 a6.

**10...g6 11.0-0-0 ♕c7**

After this simple move it becomes clear that White has some issues getting a normal attacking formation. The problem with that is that Black is about to seize the initiative.



ALINA L'AMI

**Chessbrah Eric Hansen will not easily forget his win against Lu Shanglei. It doesn't happen very often that you defeat a fellow grandmaster in 20 moves. With Black.**

**12.♕d2**

Not a good move but the alternatives were not very appealing either.

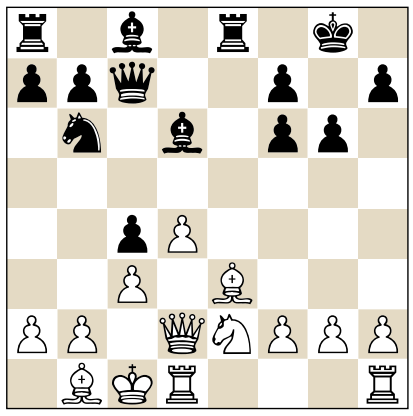
After 12.h4 c4 13.♗e4 f5 14.♗f3 f4 15.♗d2 ♘f6 16.♖de1 ♗f5 17.♕d1 ♕a5 Black is winning.

And White is also in big trouble after 12.♗b5 c4 13.h4 a6 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.h5 ♗f5 16.♕d2.

12.dxc5?! ♘xc5 shows 9... ♘d7 is effective, since it dissuades White from ever bailing out and releasing the tension with dxc5, as 13.♘d4 ♘xd3+ 14.♕xd3 a6 leaves Black better.

And, finally, the weakening 12.b3 is extremely unattractive, although better than the game continuation (White cannot allow Black to play ...c4): 12...♘b6 13.c4 ♗g4 14.h4 a5 15.h5 a4 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.♔b1, with an unclear position.

**12...c4 13.♗b1 ♘b6**



**14.h4?** White had to play 14.d5, after which Black is doing very well but has nowhere near the level of control that I wielded when I put my knight on d5. After 14.d5, the play can continue 14...♗g4 15.h3 ♗xe2 16.♕xe2 f5 (going for counterplay) 17.♕f3 ♘d7, and ...b5-b4 is next.

**14...♘d5**

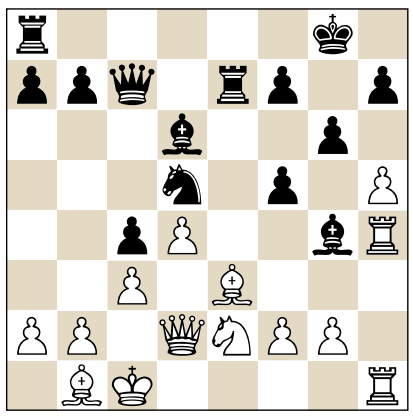
Black is close to winning now: the fantastic knight, the e-file, and the strong bishop+queen battery contribute to Black's much more fluid set-up, which can combine both defence and attack. In addition, the very simple ...b7-b5-b4 is looming.

**15.h5 ♗g4 16.♖h4**

After 16.♖de1 b5 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.♗h6 b4 19.f3 ♗e6 20.♗e4 ♖ab8 White can fight, but I doubt it will be enough to hold off Black.

**16...f5** Consolidating my bishop, while creating a bystander on b1. The position almost plays itself, as long as Black doesn't make any grave miscalculations.

**17.♖dh1 ♖e7**

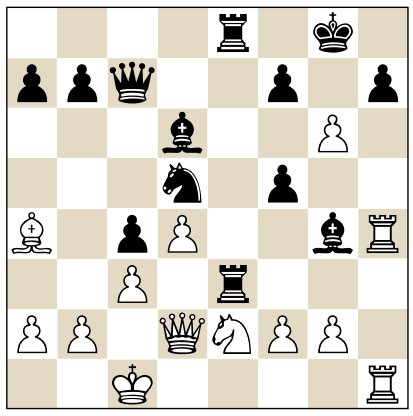


**18.♗c2** Lu was visibly demoralized here, and for good reason, since he has run out of ammunition.

The desperate alternative was 18.♖xg4, but after 18...fxg4 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♗g5 ♖f8! 21.♗xe7 ♕xe7, the weak dark squares and the f2-pawn are too much.

**18...♖ae8 19.♗a4** After 19.hxg6 fxg6 White has nothing and will be helpless against the danger from the e-file: 20.♔b1 ♘xe3 21.fxe3 ♖xe3 22.♘c1 ♗f4 23.♖xh7 ♕xh7 24.♖xh7 ♔xh7, and Black will follow up with ...♗h6 and ...♖e1, with fatal consequences.

**19...♖xe3 20.hxg6**



**20...fxg6**

I decided to choose the lazier and far more aesthetic continuation, which was generously rewarded with a resignation.

Objectively stronger was 20...♖xe2 21.gxf7+ (or 21.♗xe8 fxg6 22.♖xh7 ♕xh7 23.♖xh7 ♗f4 and game over) 21...♕xf7 22.♗xe8 ♖xe8 23.♕g5+ ♔h8, and White can resign.

After the text-move there are the following lines: 21.fxe3 ♖xe3 and now: 22.♖xh7 ♕xh7 23.♖xh7 ♔xh7 24.♗d1 (or 24.♘g1 ♗g3 25.♔c2 ♖e1) 24...♖xe2 25.♗xe2 ♗f4, winning, or 22.♖xg4 fxg4 23.♔b1 ♕e7 24.♘c1 a6 25.♗d1 b5, a sad position, but one wouldn't fault White for playing this out. In addition to having more pawns, Black also has the strongest pieces. ■

Hans Ree

# Always at the head of the table

*Najdorf X Najdorf* by Liliana Najdorf, originally published in Spanish in 1999, is now available in an English translation. It is a beautiful memoir of the great Don Miguel, written by his daughter with some sorrow, but above all with love.

In 1971 in Wijk aan Zee, at the tournament that then still had its old name of Hoogovens Tournament, I had a conflict with Najdorf, the great Don Miguel or, as he was called affectionately by his Argentine friends and colleagues, El Viejo, the Old Man. The conflict lasted almost a week. I thought Najdorf had behaved impossibly and I was very angry with him. I presume that he was angry with me, too. I will not go into the details of our conflict, as I already did so in my obituary in New In Chess 1997/5. Let me just sketch the final scene.

As I was informed later, the most attractive women in Wijk aan Zee and surrounding areas had been mobilized by the tournament organisers to soften El Viejo's heart. A Dutch television crew had come to witness the end of our game. For the third time I played the final move 45... c2-c1♕+. Najdorf shook hands with me and with a broad smile resigned in a position which he probably knew to be a draw. He was radiant. 'Come on, Ree,' he said, pulling me over to a board to analyse a position from another game. Afterwards we played blitz games into the night.

He had taken the stage, as was his wont. As Oscar Panno, another Argentine former World Championship Candidate, wrote: El Viejo reminded me of Don Quixote, in the part where he says to Sancho Panza: 'Wherever I may be, I sit at the head of the table.'

## Storming the Soviet embassy

On their way to the Olympiad in Moscow in 1956, the Argentine team had arrived in Vienna only to find that Aeroflot had a 15-day waiting list for tickets to Moscow. The Olympiad would start the next day. What to do?

As Panno relates, the team, headed by El Viejo, went to the Soviet embassy, where Najdorf made a scene. He shouted in Russian that he refused to deal with underlings and would only speak to the ambassador, but was met by a secretary. Najdorf barked at him: 'I have come to give you a chance to avoid a scandal. This afternoon we have scheduled a press conference to denounce the Soviet Union for trying to obstruct the Argentinean team's travel to Russia.'

Argentina was a very strong chess nation at that time and had finished in second place behind the Soviet Union at the previous three Olympiads. Of course the secretary had no idea what Najdorf was talking about, but he realized that the man was unstoppable and later that day the team was handed their tickets.

This and many other anecdotes can be found near the end of Liliana Najdorf's memoir, where she included recollections from people, mostly from the chess world, who had known her father well. It's clear that having Najdorf around could be exhilarating, but also unbearable sometimes. Miguel Quinteros, who at some point felt compelled to go to court against his former mentor, tells a story of a real love-hate relationship, fortunately with a happy end.

## Living with a giant

If chess players in Najdorf's circle could be driven mad by him, it must have been much harder to be his daughter, and Liliana makes no secret of the fact that her relation with her father was often tempestuous. In the opening chapter she writes: 'To say he was larger than life strikes me as an understatement. I look for synonyms that will help me to define him, and in those words I find him: passionate, disproportionate, ostentatious, gigantic, extraordinary, overwhelming, marvellous. Wise.' She also calls him 'remote but omnipresent', a situation that started already in 1952, the year she was

born. Her father, travelling abroad for chess, saw her for the first time when she was already four months old.

They often fought. She writes: 'It took many years (and many times coming to blows) to make me accept the idea that something could be good for me, even when he thought it was.'

At his funeral in 1997 she read a letter that she had written to him some time before. One part of it went: 'One must be alert, because some of his "gigantism" can be contagious, and one ceases to be normal, with gigantic whims and enormous demands. It is certainly not easy or comfortable to have a giant for a father. He makes a lot of noise and casts great shadows. However, and despite the disadvantages, it is yet a privilege like no other. And also the pride one feels at being his daughter is gigantic.'

He was buried as a national hero with pomp and circumstance by the Argentine army, in military uniforms and with a brass band that played Chopin's funeral march while the procession passed. Liliana, who would have preferred a more intimate ceremony, writes: 'Those of us close to him knew that such pomp would satisfy his vanity, and we could almost hear him saying in his markedly strange accent, "You see what honors they give El Viejo? And to a Jew!"'

## Finding him in Poland

Half a year later she went to Poland, where her father was born and had lived till 1939, when he went to the Olympiad in Buenos Aires as a member of the Polish team. During that event World War II broke out with the attack by Germany on Poland. Najdorf had a wife and daughter in Warsaw. When he returned in 1945, he found that they had been murdered by the Germans, just as most of his family.

Liliana wanted to understand her father by visiting the country where he had been a young man. She went to Auschwitz and to Warsaw, where she attended the opening of the Polish Championship and handed a trophy to the best player in Warsaw. She tells that she saw her father's eyes in the eyes of a cab driver, recognized his language and his laughter, and in the commotion preceding the tournament, in every player's concentration she recognized the blank expression that had so often met her gaze when she looked at him, when his attention was focused on the chessboard, far away from her.

She found him in the funny, exaggerated anecdotes featuring him as a protagonist, told by everyone who had known him, and she found him in the moment of silence that was held for him.

After seeing a documentary about the destruction of Warsaw by the Nazis, she thought about her father returning there in late 1945 and finding only ruins, and it made her understand an expression he used his whole life: 'Tragedy, tragedy!' he would shout every time some trivial thing got in the way of what he wanted. She writes: 'For the first time I realized what he meant. For the first time I did not criticize his exaggeration nor fault him for excess. I found him.'

**'Passionate, disproportionate, ostentatious, gigantic, extraordinary, overwhelming, marvellous. Wise.'**

## Tall tales and inventions

This is a beautiful memoir, well written and often moving. Compared with the original Spanish edition that appeared in Argentina in 1999, the American edition published by Russell Enterprises is much extended. There is a long introduction by Jan Timman, who also analysed 12 games in depth. Other games, many photographs and several articles have been added. Besides, the translator, Taylor Kingston, felt duty-bound to correct the many factual errors in the original edition that were not so much the fault of Liliana, but of Don Miguel himself. This lover of tall tales, exaggerations and sometimes pure inventions told his daughter many stories about his adventures in the chess world, and she did not have the historical expertise to correct him. Kingston's many corrections were approved and endorsed by Liliana.

Together with her book I received another book from the same publisher in my mailbox: *Checkmate, Bobby Fischer's Boy's Life Columns*. It's a collection of the columns that Fischer wrote from December 1966 till January 1970 for the monthly magazine of the Boy Scouts of America.

In his first column Fischer tells his young readers that it is possible to make rapid progress in chess: 'For example, Miguel Najdorf, one of our great players, learned the moves at 16 and won the Polish championship the same year!'

There he goes again! I can almost hear Najdorf telling this boastful story to young Bobby. In his foreword to Fischer's columns, Andy Soltis notes what Taylor Kingston had to note several times in his corrections in Liliana Najdorf's book: that Najdorf was never Polish champion. He became acquainted with the moves at age 10, didn't play in his national championship until 15 years later and never won it. ■

# Rock 'n' Roll

## **Nakamura** wins Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival for third consecutive time – **Ju Wenjun** claims £ 15,000 women's prize

Gibraltar is an outpost of quintessential Britishness at the mouth of the Mediterranean, and has been for over 300 years. This strategic 2.3 square miles of land mass and 1,300 ft of limestone is known affectionately as 'The Rock', and it's one of the few remaining fragments of what was once coloured pink in the atlas and claimed as part of the British empire. But as **JOHN B. HENDERSON** writes, the Rock is more than making its mark on another map, the chess map.

Braving the warmer climes, glorious sunshine, and not to mention the ever-mischievous – and sometimes downright dangerous – Barbary apes, there's 30,000 inhabitants on this Crown dependency that determinedly cling on for dear life to empire and all that: Sterling currency, red post boxes, pubs selling warm beer, bobbies on the beat, familiar high street shops; and banks, and the use of the English language that are all legacies of the Rock's long association with dear Ol' Blighty after it was ceded to it 'forever' in 1713 under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht.

Apart from this Britishness-on-the-Med, another thing that Gibraltar holds dear to its heart now is a burgeoning reputation of organising arguably the world's strongest annual Open tournaments or, as some might claim it to be, a 'Super-Open'. After all, the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival has become a byword in the chess community for top quality fields, professional organisation, entertaining live commentary, social events and a generous prize-fund, plus a wonderful venue in Brian Callaghan's 4-star Caleta Hotel.

The 2017 edition, the 15th anniversary of the tournament, more than maintained those high standards, as main organisers GM Stewart Conquest and Callaghan provided something for everyone that competitors of all levels can enjoy. For one, there's the mild weather in the midst of winter that's always a winner for a family break. The prizes are substantial, with the bonus attraction of many of them reserved for women, thus attracting more than your average number of elite female players.

There's also the entertainment element that you would associate with festival festivities, with a slick and professional live commentary and recap team (GMs Simon Williams, Jovanka Houska and Tania Sachdev), a bevy of snap-happy photographers, the nightly 'Master Classes', the ever-popular team-

SOPHIE TRIAY

**Speed-demon Hikaru Nakamura prevailed in the blitz tie-breaks to claim the Tradewise Masters trophy for the third time and take home £ 23,000. Ju Wenjun won the £ 15,000 Women's prize.**

blitz tournaments, and not forgetting the 'friendly rivalry' associated with the 'Battle of the Sexes' chess challenge that's now become a standard fixture.

This year's 15th edition attracted a cosmopolitan field from 54 countries that included 77 GMs and 52 IMs doing battle for a total prize-fund that exceeded £100,000, and £23,000 going to the overall winner. The female prizes accounted for £44,000 of this total, with the top female player going home with a cool £15,000.

All of this lured several top-10 players (past and/or present): Fabiano Caruana, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Hikaru Nakamura, Veselin Topalov, Vassily Ivanchuk, Peter Svidler, Nigel Short, Michael Adams and Boris Gelfand. Also in the mix was the reigning Women's World Champion Hou Yifan and former Women's World Champions Antoaneta Stefanova and Mariya Muzychuk.

Quite a formidable bunch of top-rated contenders then vying for the prizes – but invariably there's a 'surprise package', and this year it proved to be the relatively unknown 21-year-old Spanish GM David Anton. In 2014, Anton came from nowhere to take second place behind Alexander Motylev in the European Individual Championship. And he proved this wasn't just a one-off with a couple of strong performances, including this year's Gibraltar Masters.

Anton joined the leading pack after Round 5, and the 24th seed (rated 2650) looked at home playing amongst the 2700+s – and indeed, in the final round, he looked set for what would have been a shock victory after he established a half-point lead over the chasing pack. He more than held his own in the last round with a solid draw against notoriously tough customer Adams that took him into the clubhouse with an undefeated score of 8/10 and a guaranteed share of first place.

But the gutsy young Spaniard's hopes of outright victory were dashed, as Nakamura and Yu Yangyi – also undefeated – turned in critical last-round wins to join the front-runner in a three-way tie for first on 8/10. Anton, though, had the better tiebreak score of the three and was seeded directly into the speed playoff finals, while Nakamura and Yu first battled it out to see who would be joining him there.

After both rapid games ended in draws, blitz tie-breaks were called for, and speed-demon Nakamura easily won both games. But by now Nakamura was on fire, and the four-time US champion went on to easily roll over Anton in the final, 1½-½, to claim victory to notch up his third consecutive Gibraltar title in the process.

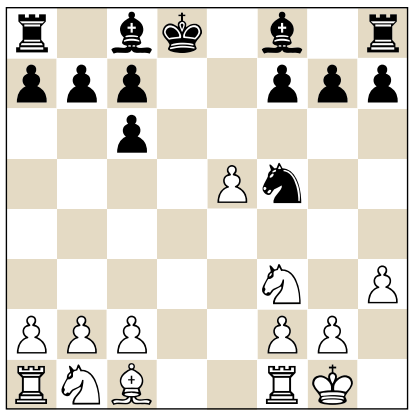
So now let's get down to the nitty-gritty of the business end of the Masters with some annotated games and more tidbits from those vying for the top prizes! Bored by the Berlin? Then have a look at this wonderfully instructive win of MVL (who finished 4th) against Michael Adams (5th).

NOTES BY
**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**

**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**
**Michael Adams**
Gibraltar 2017 (7)
Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

After a decent start to the tournament, I had 5 points out of 6. Michael was in the lead, together with David Anton and Hikaru Nakamura. Since I was doubling White that day (he had also been White in Round 6 when he beat Abhijeet Gupta – ed.), I really needed a win to be in serious contention for the title.

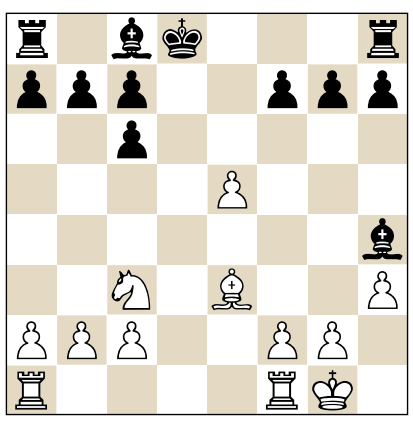
**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3**



**9...♗e7** Michael decides against 9...♔e8 10.♘c3 h5, which has been the main theoretical debate the last few years in top events.

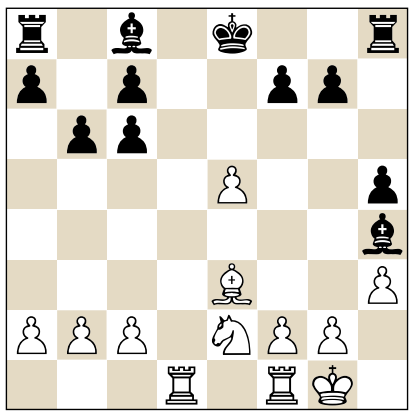
**10.♘c3 ♘h4** I hadn't expected this line, as things are far less forcing, but White also has a lot of interesting options at his disposal.

**11.♘xh4 ♗xh4 12.♗e3**



**12...h5** After 12...♗f5 13.♖ad1+ ♔c8, 14.g4! is thematic and strong, as after 14...♗xc2 15.♖d2 ♗g6 16.f4 f5 17.♘e2, followed by ♘d4, White gets his kingside pawns advancing with no possible opposition, and Black's extra queenside pawns are not much help for now.

**13.♖ad1+ ♔e8 14.♘e2 b6**



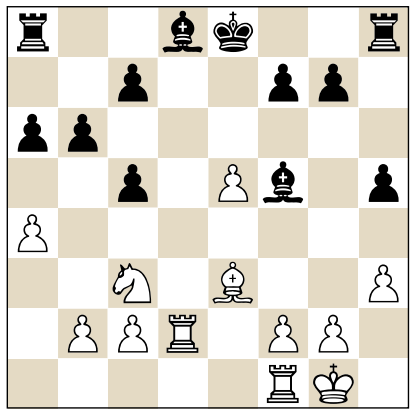
**15.a4!** An idea I had used the day before, in a different position against Abhijeet Gupta. The point here is either to get to play a5, which would be a serious achievement for White, or force Black to play ...a5 himself, when only in this particular position White gets any serious benefits out of it.

**15...c5** 15...a5 16.♘d4 ♗d7 17.♗f4 and e6 is unavoidable, since 17...c5 is met by 18.♘b5.

**16.♘c3**

After ...c5 has been played, the knight obviously belongs on either b5 or d5.

**16...♗f5 17.♘b5 ♗d8 18.♖d2 a6 19.♘c3**

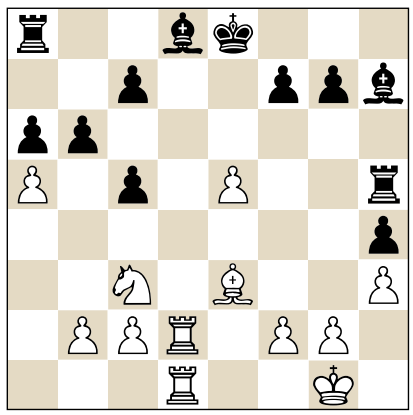


**19...h4!?** An interesting move, leaving me with all the play on the queenside in the hope that I would be unable to create any play on the kingside. Thus Black's main worry is not to allow me to combine queenside play with the help of the d-file, which I am controlling now, but which is still well covered by the light-squared bishop.

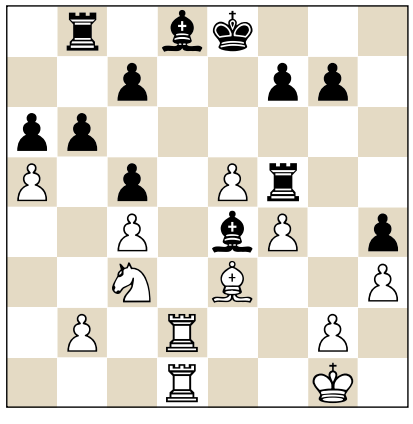
Alternatively, 19...c6 20.a5 b5 21.♗xc5 ♗xa5 22.b4 ♖d8 23.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 24.♖a1 would favour White.

And 19...a5 20.♘b5 wouldn't leave time for Black to play ...c6.

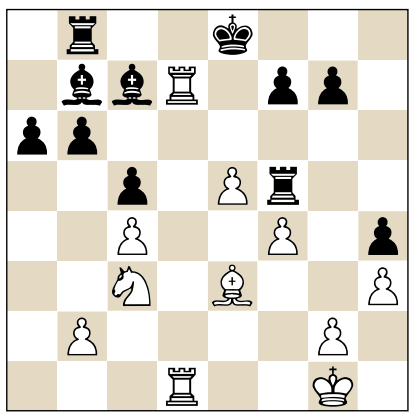
**20.a5 ♖h5 21.♖fd1 ♗h7**



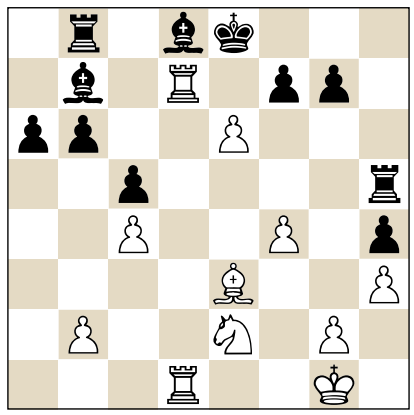
**22.♘d5** The best way to secure an edge was 22.f4 ♖h6 23.f5 ♖c6 24.♖f1.
**22...♗e4** 22...bxa5!? 23.f4 ♖h6 would have given Black access to the all-important c6-square for his rook, an important defensive resource.
**23.c4 ♖b8 24.f4 ♖f5**
Black seems to have achieved a favourable defensive set-up, but my next moves are aimed at exploiting the potentially awkward position of the rook on f5.
**25.♘c3**



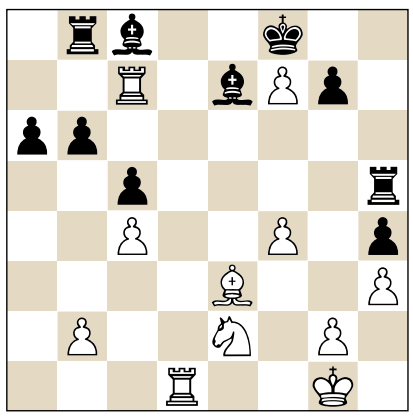
**25...♗b7**
25...♗a8! was more accurate, as the bishop will not be under attack in some lines, including the one in which White goes ♖d7, winning an important tempo for his plans.
**26.axb6 cxb6 27.♖d6 ♗c7**
27...♖h5 is met by 28.♘d5.
**28.♖d7**



**28...♗d8** After a long thought, Michael goes astray. There was a narrow path to equality, starting with 28...♖c8! 29.♘e2 ♗c6 (29...♖h5?! 30.e6) 30.♖xc7 ♖xc7 31.g4 hxg3 32.♘xg3 ♗d7!, and now 33.♖xd7 ♖xd7 34.♘xf5 ♖d1+ 35.♔f2 ♔f8, followed by ...♖b1, would give Black enough counterplay. **29.♘e2** The threat of 30.g4 hxg3 31.♘xg3 forces Black to move his rook. **29...♖h5**
**30.e6**



**30...♗e7**
One mistake begets another. The only way to stay in the game was 30...fxe6! 31.♖xg7 ♗e7, and then my intention was to keep the attack going with the following pawn sacrifice: 32.f5 ♖xf5 33.♘f4 ♗c8 34.♘g6 ♗f6 35.♖c7, when Black seems to be in trouble, but White lacks serious threats.
**31.♖c7!**
31.g4 hxg3 32.♘xg3 ♖xh3 33.♘f5 was a very tempting idea, but I rightly rejected it, since the game continuation is much clearer. Here, after 33...♗f6 34.♘d6+ ♔f8 35.♖xf7+ ♔g8, White actually doesn't have an edge at all.
**31...♗c8 32.exf7+ ♔f8**
32...♔xf7 33.♖d8 is not an option.

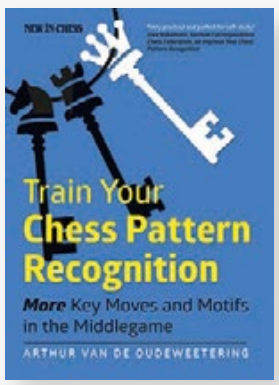


**33.f5!** The obvious way to involve both the knight and the bishop in the attack. **33...♗xf5** 33...♖xf5 34.♘f4 ♖f6 35.♘d5 ♗d8! 36.♘xf6 ♗xc7 would have forced me to find 37.♖f1! gxf6 38.♖xf6, and White wins easily after 38...♗e6 39.♗h6+ ♔e7 40.f8♕+ ♖xf8 41.♖xf8.

**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: 'I was quite happy with this game. I had managed to exert relentless pressure and had found a couple of nice ideas with which to grind out an important win against the Berlin.'**

LENNART OOTES

# SAVE 10%
ON
# CHESS PATTERN RECOGNITION




"Every ambitious player should at least make sure that he knows all motifs that 'Chess Pattern Recognition' presents."
***Harry Schaack, KARL Chess Magazine***

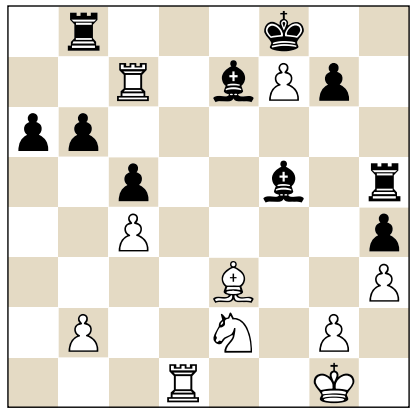
"Gives you the very pleasant feeling of learning new things without spending too much effort!"
***GM Matthew Sadler, author of 'Chess for Life'***

"Once you have stored a lot of patterns, finding the best or most interesting move at the board will take less time. The (unintentional?) side-effect of the book is: a snapshot of moderns chess at the highest level."
***IM Frank Zeller, SCHACH Magazine***

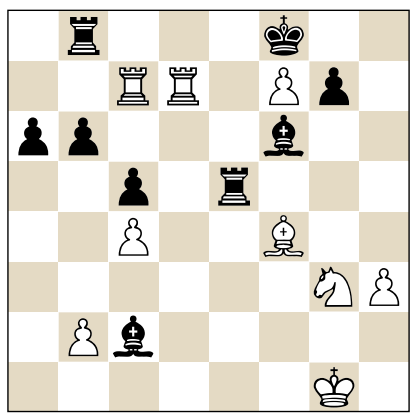
"There is no question but that this will improve the positional understanding of many club players. I'd highly recommend this to players rated around 1400 to 2100, and I think even masters can (and will) learn something from this book as well."
***Dennis Monokroussos, The Chess Mind***

**Chess Pattern Recognition Complete, 560 pages for only €39.95** (from €45.90)

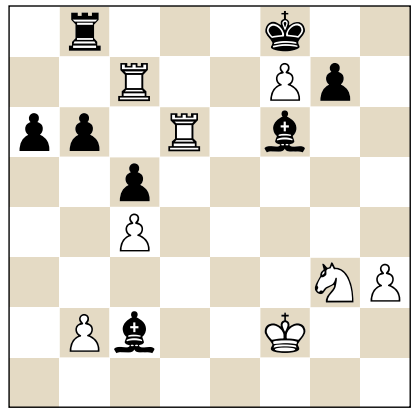
**available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com**

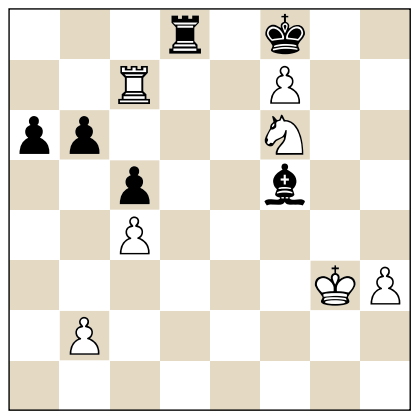
**34.g4?!** Played too fast, but I just assumed Black was busted here.
For some reason 34.♖a7 first was a killer blow (the reason, as we'll find out, being that the rook is far less exposed there). Also, Black doesn't have any useful defensive moves, as 34...♖d8 35.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 36.♖a8, 34...♗e6 35.♘f4 ♖h6 36.♘d5 and 34...g5 35.g4 would all be winning serious material for White.
**34...hxg3 35.♘xg3 ♗c2 36.♖dd7**
It was only here that I realized that 36.♖d2? would run into 36...♗g5!!, and Black miraculously escapes.
**36...♖e5 37.♗f4 ♗f6!**



And now things don't look as clear.
**38.♘h5**
38.♖a7 was easier, but I preferred a more forcing continuation.
**38...♖e1+ 39.♔f2 ♗h4+ 40.♘g3**
Bad was 40.♔f3? ♗d1+ 41.♔g2 ♖e2+, with perpetual check.
**40...♖e6 41.♗d6+ ♖xd6 42.♖xd6 ♗f6**
After some thought, I took a radical decision, since I didn't like the fact Black could take not only the b2-pawn, but probably the crucial f7-pawn as well.

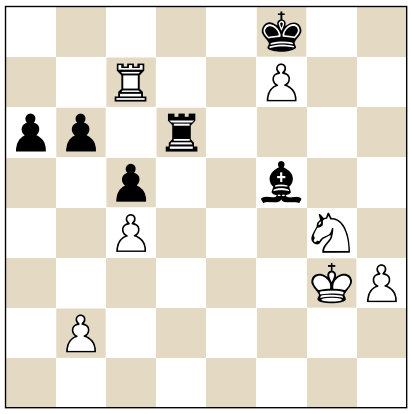


**43.♖xf6!? gxf6 44.♘h5 ♖d8 45.♘xf6**
Still, I felt there was a serious danger that Black could hold this position, even if my rook and knight were cooperating quite well. But it turned out that White was well in time to decide the game.
**45...♗f5** After 45...♗g6 46.♘d7+ ♔xf7 47.♘xb6+ ♔e8 48.♘d5 ♖b8 possibly the strongest is 49.h4 ♖xb2+ 50.♔g3, and with the king cut off, the h-pawn ready to advance further and the c5-pawn soon to fall, White should win this position, even though it would require precision.
**46.♔g3**

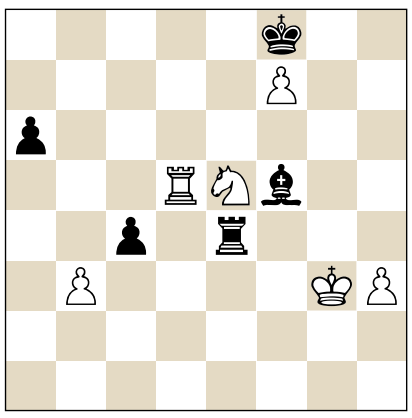


**46...♖d6** Making things too easy for me. After 46...♖d4, 47.♘g4! is a key move to support the f7-pawn: 47...♗xg4 48.hxg4 ♖xc4, and here I would have been forced to find 49.g5 ♖c1 50.♔g2! ♖c4 51.♔f3, when Black has no way to prevent g6 and ♖c8.
46...♔g7!? 47.♘e8+ ♔f8 would help Black snatch the pawn, but I would still be in time with 48.h4 ♗e6 49.♘f6 ♗xf7 (49...♖d3+ 50.♔f4 ♗xf7 51.h5 ♗xc4 52.h6 ♖h3 53.♔g5, and the passed pawn, which is well supported

by all White's pieces, should decide the game in his favour) 50.♘d7+ ♔g8 51.h5!, with very good winning chances.
**47.♘g4**



**47...♖d4** 47...♗xg4 48.hxg4 ♖f6 49.♖b7 would be hopeless.
47...♔g7 48.♘e5 ♗g6 49.♖b7 ♖e6 50.♘f3 would lead to an easy technical win after 50...♗xf7 51.♘g5 ♖f6 52.♘xf7 ♖xf7 53.♖xb6.
**48.b3 b5** 48...♖d3+ 49.♔f4 ♗xg4 50.hxg4 ♔g7 51.g5 ♖xb3 52.g6, and the situation hasn't changed, since ♖c8 comes next.
**49.♘e5 ♖e4 50.♖xc5 bxc4 51.♖d5**

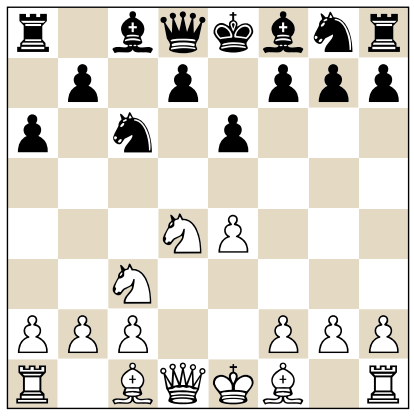


The simplest way to the win.
**51...♖xe5 52.♖xe5 ♗d3 53.b4 c3 54.♖c5 c2 55.♖c7**
Black resigned.
I was quite happy with this game, since I had managed to exert relentless pressure and had found a couple of nice ideas with which to grind out an important win against the Berlin.
However, I didn't make the most of it, because in the last three rounds I had to settle for three draws, without getting any real winning chances, leaving me out of contention for the title on the Rock.

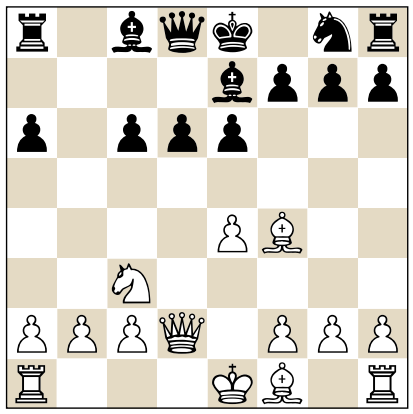
NOTES BY
## Anish Giri

**Valentin Dragnev**
**Yu Yangyi**
Gibraltar 2017 (7)
Sicilian, Taimanov Variation

Yu Yangyi scored a lot of points. He beat some higher rated players too, but this victory as Black, although not against the most famous of opponents, was still pretty impressive.
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 a6**
The classical Taimanov move order 5...♕c7 is more popular, but this has some point, too.



**6.♗f4!?** Not a well-known move, but the set-up White plays in this game looks pretty modern and challenging (though probably not that great!?). I was impressed to see how Yu handled it.
**6...d6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♕d2 ♗e7!?**
Very flexible, preparing ...e5.

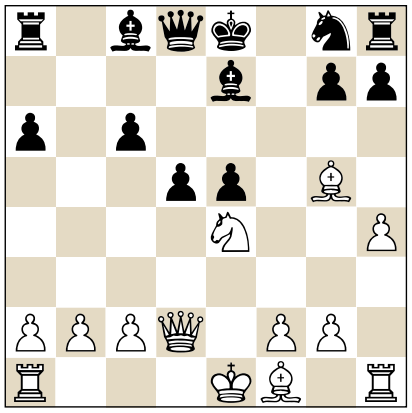


**9.h4!?** Imaginative. 9.♗e2 is a lot safer and more conventional, with unclear play after 9...e5 10.♗g3 ♘f6 11.f4. **9...e5 10.♗g5 f6!** Having the next move in mind already.
**11.♗e3 f5 12.♗g5 fxe4**
12...♘f6 feels a lot more natural to me, but to my surprise the way Yu played was also good.

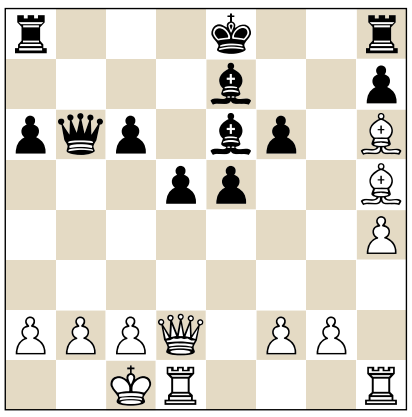
MARIA EMELIANOVA

**Yu Yangyi: an attractive and instructive lesson in king safety!**

**13.♘xe4 d5**



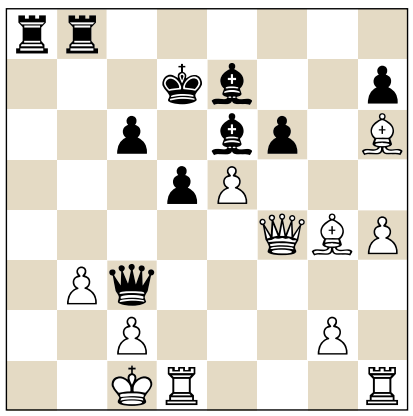
**14.0-0-0!** White is also fine.
**14...♘f6! 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 16.♗h6**
An interesting position. Black has a strong centre and the open b-file. His king is fine in the centre for now. All in all, Black is doing fine!
**16...♕b6 17.♗e2 ♗e6 18.♗h5+?**
This is one of those moves that separate good players from the very best. Letting Black execute his idea in the best version is too sweet! 18.g4!? or 18.f4!? first would have been highly unclear. White does have the plan of undermining Black's strong pawn centre. At some point c4!? also comes into consideration.



**18...♔d7!** Beautiful. This might very well be the best square for the king on the board, and the bishops on h6 and h5 are totally out of play.
**19.f4 ♖hb8 20.b3 a5!**
The rest is one-way traffic. Black's attack develops automatically once the files on the queenside are blasted open.
**21.fxe5 a4! 22.♕f4**
22.exf6 axb3 is lights out.
**22...axb3 23.axb3 ♕a5 24.♗g4 ♕c3**

LENNART OOTES

**Brothers in arms. Tournament director Stuart Conquest and festival organiser Brian Callaghan have turned Gibraltar into one of the most popular destinations in the chess world.**



The mating net is ready. **25.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 26.♕g4+ f5** White resigned. It's stunning how the black king is extremely safe on e6(!), whereas the white king is hopeless on the very respectable c1-square. Sometimes it's nice to see a game like this!

■ ■ ■

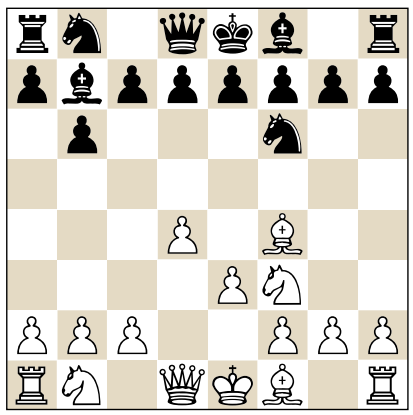
With Hou Yifan abdicating her crown over a matter of principle with FIDE over the format of the World Championship, she has now opted to abandon women-only events. However, we did say earlier that the Gibraltar Masters has many financial rewards for top women players, and Hou was the big pre-tournament favourite to take this prize – and she looked a good bet for the top prize after turning in arguably the most creative game of the whole tournament in Round 7, with her impressive win over the French IM Borya Ider.

NOTES BY
**Hou Yifan**

**Borya Ider**
**Hou Yifan**
Gibraltar 2017 (7)
Queen's Pawn, London System

Looking back at the tournament, this is the only game I am satisfied with, despite a few inaccurate moves. There was another game that could be considered my worst, which I will not say much about here.
The Gibraltar Chess Festival provides a high-class chess atmosphere which has benefited many female players and promoted women's chess in general. This was my third time playing there, and now it's time to start an interesting chess journey.

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 b6 3.♗f4 ♗b7 4.e3**

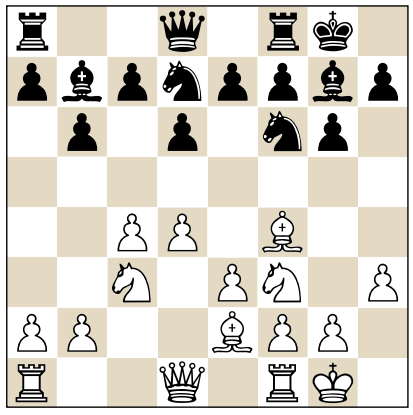


This set-up has become quite popular for White recently. Many top players choose this to avoid opening theory.

**4...g6**

Here the regular structure is 4...e6, with the idea of ...♗e7, ...c5, and so on.

**5.h3 ♗g7 6.♗e2 d6 7.c4 ♘bd7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.0-0**



**9...e6!?**

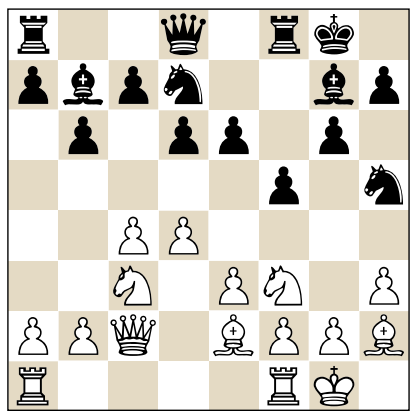
An unusual move. The most natural choice here is 9...♘e4 10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘d2 ♗b7 12.♗f3 ♕c8, keeping the option of going both ...c5 and ...e5, especially after exchanging the light-squared bishops, as there are no worries about White's d5 anymore.

**10.♕c2 ♘h5 11.♗h2**

Black's idea was clearly to use the tempo that White spends on withdrawing the bishop for the push ...f5 in order to prevent White from building a superb centre with e4, d4 and c4.

Considering this, 11.♗g5! f6 (11...♕e8?! 12.e4 e5?! 13.♘d5, and Black's position will collapse soon) 12.♗h4 g5 13.d5! might have been more precise. This is a brilliant tactical idea that validates the whole variation. Suddenly everything falls into place for White.

**11...f5**



**12.d5**

After some serious thinking my opponent played the next few moves with full confidence. Suddenly everything becomes critical, and he must have had a concrete strategy. Obviously, pushing d5 is connected with the next few moves, trying to make use of the e6-square, with typical ♘g5 ideas.

I was also considering 12.c5, based on the idea of 12...bxc5 13.♕b3, targeting the bishop on b7 and the weak e6-pawn, but after 13...♖b8 14.♕xe6+ ♔h8 this doesn't really seem to work, since Black has well-placed pieces and active play.

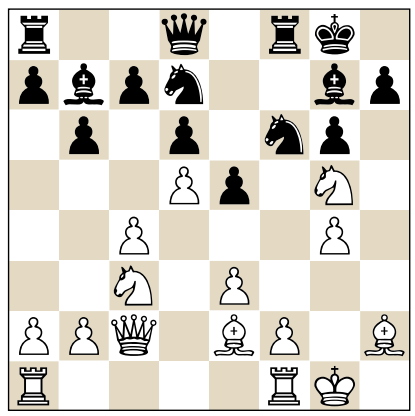
White should be slightly better after another alternative: 12.♘d2!? ♘hf6 13.♗f3. In these typical Nimzo positions, Black is normally hoping to create some counterplay against White's kingside, especially the g2-pawn. That is why exchanging the light-squared bishops favours White here. Additionally, the e4-break is always a possibility.

**12...e5**

The recommendation of the computer, 12...♗xc3, is hard to understand. After 13.♕xc3 e5 14.b4 Black cannot be too optimistic.

**13.g4 fxg4 14.hxg4 ♘hf6 15.♘g5**

Clearly this was what my opponent had been hoping for, since the knight jump to e6 seems unavoidable, when the c7-pawn also comes under attack, and if White can proceed with f4, things could become quite promising. But it's not difficult to realize that the g5-knight is also unprotected, which leads to my next move...



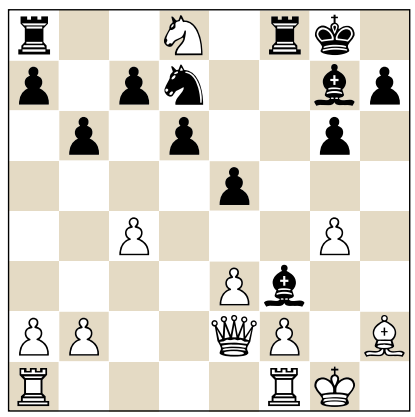
**15...♘xd5!**

The exclamation mark is for courage, not accuracy!

The rational reaction would have been 15...♘c5!? 16.f4 (16.b4?! ♘xg4!) 16...a5 17.fxe5 ♘xg4 18.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 19.♘xh7 ♘xe5 20.♗xe5 ♔xh7 21.♗d4 ♕g5+ 22.♔h1 ♖e8. Now, once the b7-bishop joins the fight, the position will be one-sided. But this will take two extra moves and gives White the time to hold the game.

During the game, 15...♘xg4 also looked tempting to me. My calculation continued 16.♘e6 ♕h4 17.♗g3 ♕h3 18.♘xf8 ♖xf8 (18...♘xe3 will be refuted by 19.♕e4!) 19.♕e4 ♖xf2! 20.♖xf2 ♕xg3+ 21.♖g2 ♕xe3+ 22.♕xe3 ♘xe3. This position is difficult to judge, as it is very unbalanced. Similar to the game, but the king is safer here. So I picked the other way.

**16.♘e6 ♘xc3 17.♘xd8 ♘xe2+ 18.♕xe2 ♗f3**



Basically, this is the position that

needed to be evaluated before making the queen sacrifice. Clearly the f3-bishop has a key role, and is at least stronger than a rook. The active black knight and the perfect pawn chain limit the activity of White's queen. Meanwhile, the king on g1 seems to be in the worst possible spot, where it can face various fatal attacks. For instance, the knight can jump to e4, the king's escape route is cut off and Black can break on the h-file to force mate.

Bearing all this in mind, White is really in a race against the clock and has to try to open the position as much as he can.

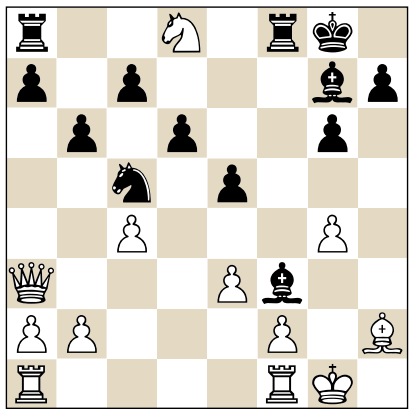
**19.♕d3**

After 19.♕c2 ♖axd8 20.♗g3! (after 20.e4 ♘f6 the difference between ♕d3 and ♕c2 is revealed) 20...♘c5 (20...♘f6 21.♗h4) 21.b4 ♘e4 22.a4 h5 things look scary for White, at least from a human point of view.

**19...♘c5!**

Clearly stronger than 19...♖axd8, when after 20.e4 (there is no ...♘f6 now) 20...♘c5 21.♕d5+ ♖f7 22.♖ae1 White gets counterplay.

**20.♕a3**



**20...♖fxd8**

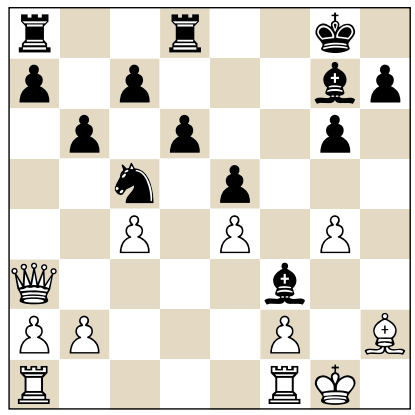
I decided to be solid, since I considered the compensation to be long-term.

Had I calculated a bit more, I would probably have seen that 20...♖axd8! was more precise, since pawn a7 is poisoned: 21.♕xa7 ♖f7! 22.b4 ♘e4, with a black attack; 21.b4! ♘e4 22.c5 dxc5 23.bxc5 ♖f7 24.cxb6 axb6, with good compensation for Black.

**21.e4**

Human intuition; otherwise ...♘e4 will be decisive. The point of e4 is that in the worst case White will be able to exchange the f3-bishop via the third rank.

21.b4 ♘e4 22.♖ac1, planning c4-c5, is suggested by the engine.



**21...♖f8!**

For the third time Black stresses that


# Judit Polgar's Chess Set, by DGT

Fine handcrafted set, specially selected by Judit Polgar
A very personal selection of chess pieces
Packed in a beautiful wooden box
Chess board signed 'Polgar Judit – the Queen of Chess'

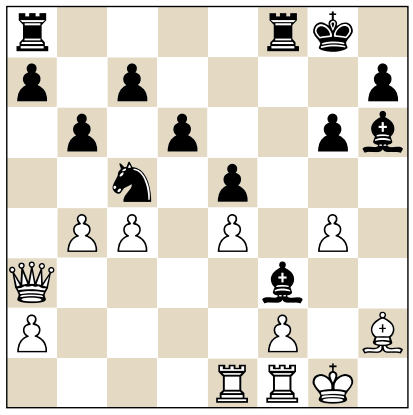
Judit Polgar chess pieces:
King height 95 mm (3.74") with two extra queens

Judit Polgar Chess Board:
500 x 500 x 13mm (19.7" x 19.7" x .51")
Tournament size squares:
55 x 55 mm (2.17" x 2.17")

normal price: board €139, pieces €89
special New In Chess price: board + pieces = ~~€228~~ **€199**
www.newinchess.com

the f3-bishop is the 'queen' in this position, and that the f2-pawn should not be allowed to move.

**22.♖ae1 ♗h6 23.b4**



**23...♘e6!?** At this point, the idea came to my mind to restrict White's queen with minor pieces.

Obviously, more natural and probably best was 23...♘xe4 24.♖xe4 ♗xe4 25.f3. Now, finally, White's king is relatively safe, but material is almost equal and all remaining factors favour Black.

**24.c5 ♘d4** Cutting off b3 for the queen.

**25.♕d3 b5** Cutting off c4.

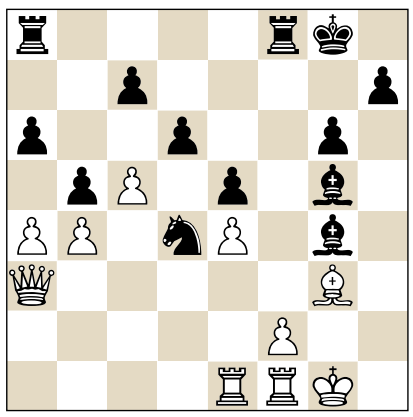
**26.♗g3 ♗g5** Stopping ♗h4.

**27.a4 a6**

Strengthening the position.

**28.♕a3** Finally, Black can no longer stop ♕a2, check, followed by the queen going to d5. But the question remains, is that really good for White?

**28...♗xg4**



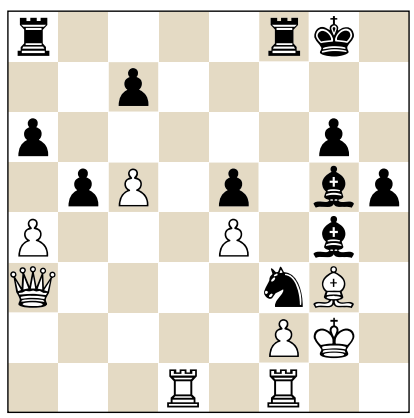
**29.♖d1** A bit passive. Fighting for real counterplay was called for.

After 29.cxd6! cxd6 30.f4 exf4 31.♕d3, the queen can show its great power now that the position is completely open. This cannot be that bad for White at all.

But 29.f4?! exf4 30.♕d3 will hit on 30...dxc5! 31.bxc5 ♖ad8, and White is lost.

**29...♘f3+** Again declining to win back material in order to keep pressure on the king. But 29...♗xd1 30.♖xd1 ♗e7 was also possible.

**30.♔g2 dxc5 31.bxc5 h5**



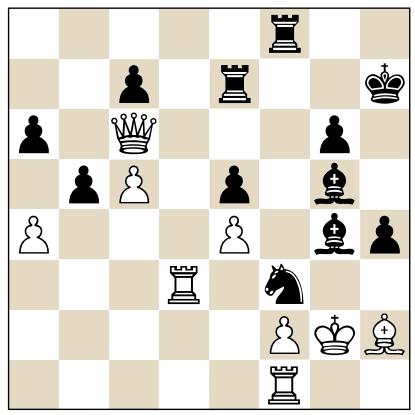
**32.♕a2+** A bizarre position. It is not clear what Black wants to achieve besides pushing the h-pawn connected with the bishop pair. This could easily be stopped here with 32.♖d3 h4 33.♗h2. Anyway, Black can simply hold and do nothing, since all white pieces are needed to protect the king. The position might be drawn by waiting moves.

**32...♔h7 33.♕d5?! ♖ae8 34.♕c6 ♖e7**

The previous three moves helped Black to fortify the position, while the black threats still exist.

**35.♖d3** The only move. White's a-pawn is still far away from promotion, as the following variation shows: 35.a5 h4 36.♕xa6 hxg3 37.fxg3 ♖ef7 38.♕b7 ♔g7 39.a6 ♗h3+. and White gets mated.

**35...h4 36.♗h2**



**36...bxa4?**

Missing a direct win with an impul-

**Hou Yifan created quite a stir when she expressed her anger about the pairings by throwing her last-round game. But the Women's World Champion was also involved in the highlight of the 2017 edition, the brilliancy that she produced against French IM Borya Ider.**

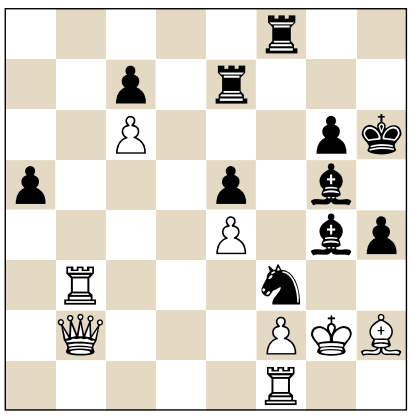
MARIA EMELIANOVA

sive move. After the surprising 36...♖ef7!, f2 is too vulnerable: 37.♖b1 ♘d4 38.♕d5 ♖xf2+ 39.♔h1 ♘c2 40.♕xe5 ♗e3!, and wins.

**37.♕xa4 ♔h6**

Even regaining material might leave Black with an advantage: 37...♘xh2 38.♔xh2 ♗e2 39.♖dd1 ♖ef7 40.♖de1 ♗xf1 41.♖xf1 ♖xf2+ 42.♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 43.♔h3. This is clearly better for Black, but it would not be easy to win. After 37...♖ef7 38.♕a2, the queen will realize that the best square to defend from is a2.

**38.♕a3 ♖ef7 39.♕b2 ♖e7 40.c6 a5 41.♖b3**

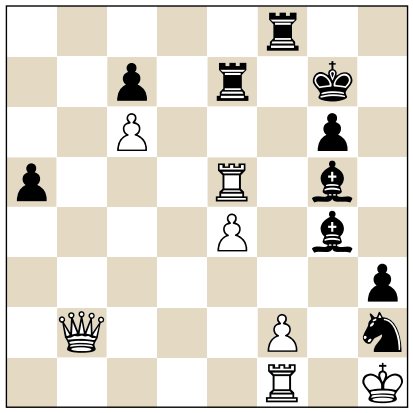


**41...♔g7** Stronger was 41...a4! 42.♖a3 (after 42.♖b8 h3+ 43.♔h1 ♘xh2 44.♖xf8 ♘xf1 45.♕b8 there is 45...♖h7!, a hidden move that secures the win) 42...♘d2 43.♗xe5 h3+ 44.♔g1 ♘c4.

**42.♖b5** Borya defended quite well in most of the game after the queen sacrifice, but probably under high pressure he succumbed.

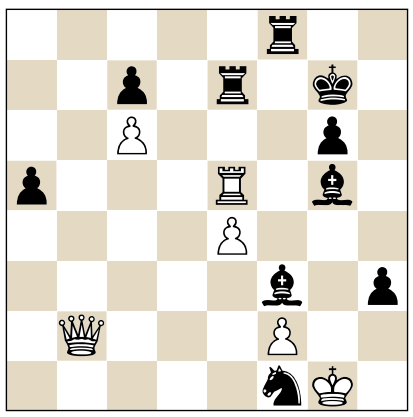
After the waiting move 42.♔h1 it is still not clear what Black wants to do.

**42...h3+ 43.♔h1 ♘xh2 44.♖xe5**



**44...♗f3+** Avoiding a last trick. 44...♖xe5 wouldn't lead to a win: 45.♕xe5+ ♔h6 46.f4 ♗f6 47.♕c5 ♘xf1 48.♕xf8+ ♗g7 (48...♔h5 looks winning, with unstoppable promotion, but after 49.♕xf6 ♗f3+ 50.♔g1 h2+ 51.♔f2, don't forget there's a checkmate on g5!) 49.♕a3!, and miraculously White might take over here.

**45.♔g1 ♘xf1**



There's no good way for White to keep giving checks, as his king is surrounded by black pieces.

**46.♖xe7+ ♔h6 47.♕g7+ ♔h5 48.♕h7+ ♔g4 49.♖e8 ♖xe8 50.♕d7+ ♔h4 51.♔xf1 ♖d8 52.♕h7+ ♔g4** White resigned.

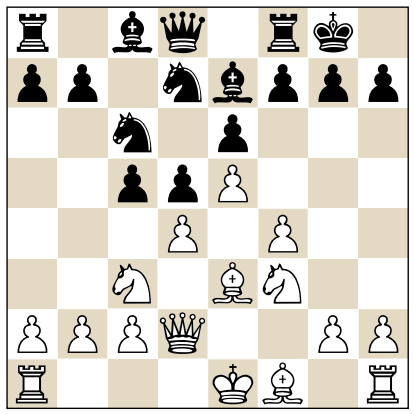
But Hou or no Hou, women's chess needs a new champion, and this could well be Hou's compatriot, 26-year-old Ju Wenjun. She's only the third woman in history to achieve a FIDE rating over 2600 and has turned in some impressive results of late. And when Hou and Ju faced each other in Round 8, Hou pressed too hard and fell victim to a clever mating attack.

NOTES BY
**Anish Giri**

**Hou Yifan**
**Ju Wenjun**
Gibraltar 2017 (8)
French Defence, Steinitz Variation

Maybe I am imagining things, but I do think that for Ju it must have been a very naughty dream to beat Hou Yifan, preferably with the black pieces. A thought she was afraid to think.

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕d2 0-0**

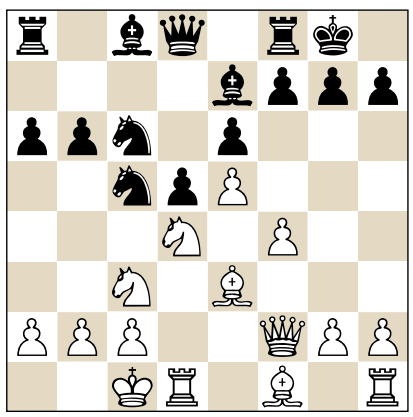


These lines in the French (there are some varieties with ...a6, ...b6, all kinds of move orders) fall in and out of fashion. The positions are very complicated and double-edged, but as you could read in Kramnik's annotations to his game against Buhmann in New In Chess 2016/6, they are unfortunately all strategically lost for Black.

**9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♕f2 b6**

There is something incredibly odd about the fact that Black plays ...a6 and ...b6, but the French fans have already been given enough trouble by Kramnik's annotations, so I will just pretend I don't notice how unsound Black's play looks.

**12.♘d4**



As I understand it, with this move White plays for a small positional plus. If you want to play for mate, the knight should keep looking in the g5-h7 direction.

**12...♕c7 13.g3**

I have mixed feelings about a fianchetto in this structure, but I have done it a few times myself. White does strengthen his f4-pawn against potential ...f6 ideas and the bishop fights for the centre in case it eventually opens up. Still, I don't really like how Hou treated the opening in this game.

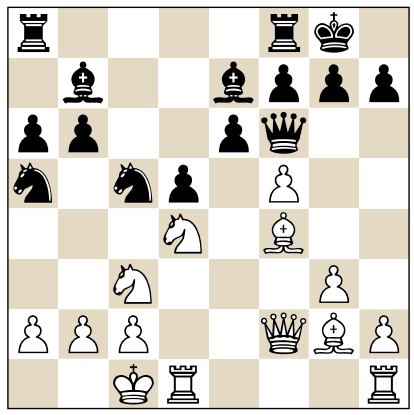
**13...♗b7 14.♗g2 ♘a5**

A little provocative. The alternative seems better to me: 14...♘xd4! 15.♗xd4 b5. This looks a lot sounder: ...b4 is coming, even after 16.a3 ♖fc8!? 17.f5 b4! 18.axb4 ♘e4 19.♘xe4 dxe4.

Ju Wenjun is only the third woman in history to achieve a FIDE rating over 2600. Her win against Hou Yifan was a big step towards the women's winner's cheque.

LENNART OOTES

**15.f5!? ♕xe5** Black has to accept the challenge. **16.♗f4 ♕f6**



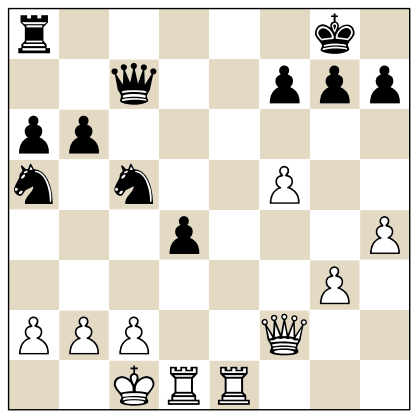
**17.h4!?**

One of two tempting options. 17.♖he1 was critical as well: 17...♘c4 18.h4!? h6! 19.b3!? This is a mess. 19...♘e4!? 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.bxc4 e5, and Black emerges fine here, but this is only one of the options.

**17...e5! 18.♘xd5?**

The position is double-edged, but I would prefer Black here. Instead, White could have got a nice endgame: 18.♗g5 ♕d6 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.f6!! ♕xf6 21.♕xf6 gxf6 22.♘f5 d4 23.♗xb7 ♘cxb7 (23...♘axb7 24.♘d5! ♘d7 25.c3! also leaves White enjoying him- or herself) 24.♘e4, and the knights are extremely beautiful and dominant. But the position is pretty solid for Black, considering she is going to be a pawn up, even after White picks up the f6-pawn.

**18...♗xd5 19.♗g5 ♕d6 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♗xd5 exd4 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖he1 ♕c7**



**24.b4**

So far, everything was more or less forced. I guess Hou had calculated up to here, but it seems that after Black sacrifices the exchange, she will be doing well.

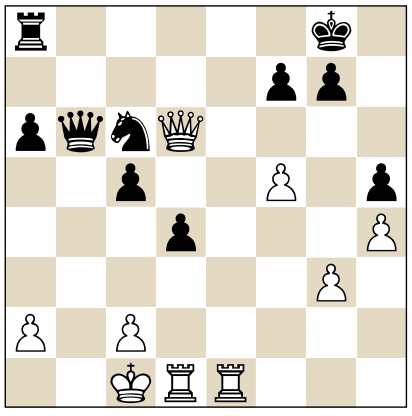
24.♕xd4?? is asking to be given to an amateur as a puzzle.

**24...♘c6!?** 24...♘c4 was a serious alternative, but now White would probably pick up the pawn instead of the knight: 25.♕xd4.

**25.bxc5 bxc5**

This position is balanced, but eventually it is Hou Yifan who goes astray.

**26.♕f4 ♕b6 27.♕d6 h5**

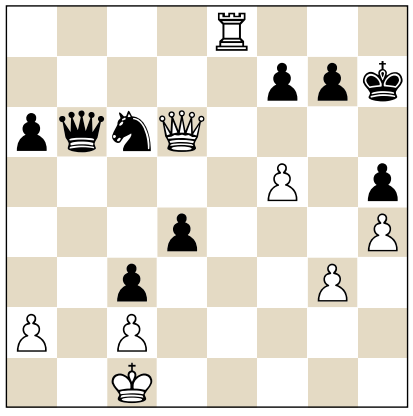


**28.♖e5?** 28.♕d7! would force matters: 28...♘b4 29.♖e8+ ♔h7 30.♖xa8 ♘xa2+ 31.♔d2 ♕b4+ 32.♔e2 ♕c4+ 33.♔f3 ♕c3+ 34.♖d3 ♕xc2, and apparently, this insane position is a draw. White loses a rook and then it's a perpetual check, too.

**28...c4?**

Extremely natural, but there was a surprisingly strong option: 28...♕b7!. An amazing resource: 29.♖xc5 ♘b4!, and suddenly Black is winning: 30.♕xd4 ♘xa2+ 31.♔d2 ♕g2+! (this is a long one) 32.♔d3 ♖e8!. White's king can't escape here. The knight on a2 seems out of play, but it cuts off all the return squares for the white king.

**29.♖de1 c3 30.♖e8+ ♖xe8 31.♖xe8+ ♔h7** Here White had to find a study-like draw.

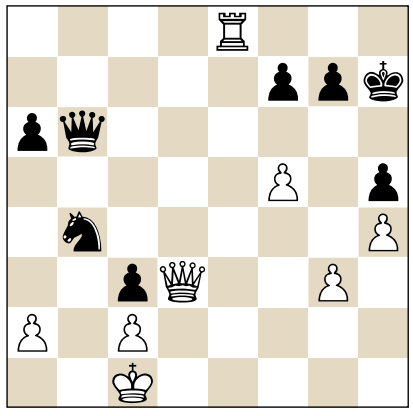


**32.♕d5?**

She had to find: 32.f6!! ♕b2+ 33.♔d1 ♕b1+ 34.♔e2 ♕xc2+. This looks bad, but things are not so simple: 35.♔f3 ♕f5+ 36.♔e2. Now, first of all ♖h8+ is a threat, the c6-knight is hanging and there probably are a couple more threats. If the queens get traded on f6, White will be doing well after ♔d3. Black can either give a perpetual or try 36...gxf6, and now the cold-blooded 37.♕xc6 d3+ 38.♔e3 d2 39.♖d8 is totally fine (a draw to be exact), while 37.♖h8+!! happens to be a perpetual as well.

**32...d3!!** This is much stronger than the checks. The problem with White's last move is that there was no threat. In case of 32.f6, 33.♖h8+ was one.

**33.♕xd3 ♘b4!**



A beautiful position. White has no defence.

**34.♕e4 ♕g1+! 35.♕e1 ♕g2! 36.♕e4 ♕d2+** White resigned.

An impressive game! It seems that while Hou Yifan may have quit the Women's World Championship cycle, the Chinese might still have their flag proudly waving in this discipline!

SOPHIE TRIAY

**Once again The Battle of the Sexes guaranteed an evening full of good-humoured banter, crazy chess and lots of fun.**

And, brimming with confidence following this win, Ju duly went on to record a career-best performance as she finished on 7/10 to capture the women's top-prize of £15,000. But in the last round, the normally amiable Hou shocked everyone with a bizarre and uncharacteristic protest, claiming that 'her pairings were being manipulated' throughout because she faced more female opponents than anyone else.

Hou turned up half an hour late for her game against Indian GM Lalith Babu, and then resigned after five moves of gibberish that began with the moves 1.g4 and 2.f3. Afterwards, Hou said she was 'really, really upset' for the 'unbelievable and weird pairings' that meant seven of her 10 opponents were women. She said in her post-game interview that she had mentioned her concerns to the event's chief arbiter earlier in the week, but

to no avail. So she decided on a very public display of protest: throwing her final game.

But Brian Callaghan, the festival organiser, firmly denied the accusation, saying that the pairings throughout were all made directly from a computer.

More regrettable news concerned the same Brian Callaghan. This was his final year in charge, as the driving force behind the festival had announced his retirement (not connected in any way to the incident).

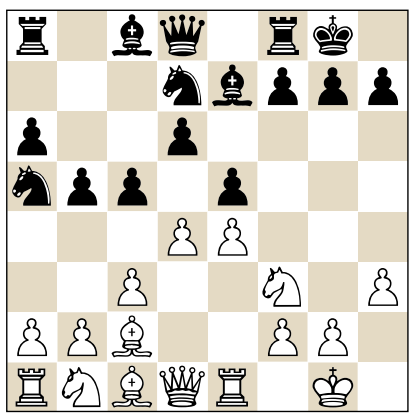
But let's leave our coverage of the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival for this year on a high note rather than a low note, with two of the best games from the Masters by Anton and Nakamura that ultimately went a long way to decide the outcome of the final.

NOTES BY
**Anish Giri**

**Veselin Topalov**
**David Anton**
Gibraltar 2017 (9)
Ruy Lopez, Chigorin Variation

Many have praised Anton Guijarro, claiming he played the best chess in Gibraltar. This might very well be true, if you beat Topalov with Black in the penultimate round!

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♘d7**



This sub-line of the Spanish Chigorin is one of the most complicated variations out there.

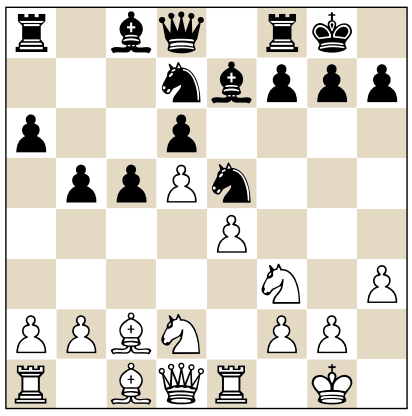
**12.♘bd2**

12.d5 ♘b6 13.b3 ♗d7 was seen in Zhigalko-Anton, Tallinn blitz 2016, and in Zhigalko-Anton, Doha rapid 2016.

**12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♘c6**

The sequence that Black had prepared with 11...♘d7.

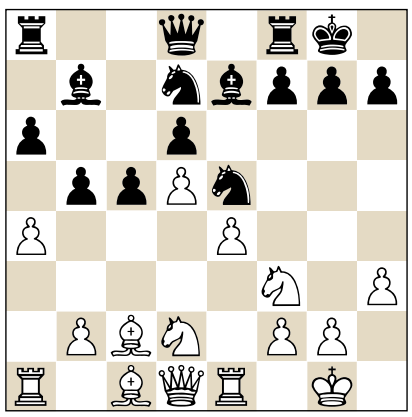
**14.d5 ♘ce5**



I have seen a few games here in which Black lost without a fight (Peter Svidler recently fell victim to a well-prepared Ernesto Inarkiev). But if he knows exactly what he is doing, things are less simple.

**15.a4 ♗b7!?**

Svidler played the more logical 15...♖b8. Once, in a similar structure, Peter went ...♗b7-c8!? against me, so I would have been surprised if he had made the same move as David Anton. Things, however, are very concrete in this line, so Anton must have had his reasons.



**16.♕e2**

An improvement prepared by Topalov for this game, since it looks

# Celeb 64

John Henderson

**Benny Andersson**

I nostalgically remember when Abba took the world by storm with their 1974 Eurovision winner, 'Waterloo'. From there, the Swedish palindromic pop pioneers morphed into a supergroup. But the boy-girl/boy-girl tangled relationships inevitably led to a break-up, both personally and professionally.
And when they did split in 1982, the half I never showed an interest in as a teenager went on to have a big chess connection with Abba boys Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus collaborating with lyricist Sir Tim Rice for *Chess: The Musical*. Although it spawned global hits – 'One Night in Bangkok' and 'I Know Him So Well' – their world championship-themed musical was panned by the critics, and its Broadway run lasted just four nights longer than there are squares on the chessboard.
But Benny was the real chess aficionado. Even in his Abba days, he was often seen relaxing poolside with his magnetic chess set. And *Chess: The Musical* wasn't his only major chess project. Benny also owned the successful Swedish stable 'Chess Racing', with jockey colours of black and white checks and racehorses named 'Steinitz' and 'Smyslov' after two World Champions.
So you'll forgive me then when I say I just couldn't resist a flutter on Smyslov when it ran at Hamilton Racecourse, and it romped home at 4/1. Trouble is, I unwisely put all my winnings the following week on Benny's Steinitz when it ran – and I use that word loosely – at Newbury. ■

LENNART OOTES

**Many have praised Spanish GM David Anton (21) for playing the best chess in Gibraltar. And this might very well be true.**

like this variation is a major part of David Anton's repertoire.

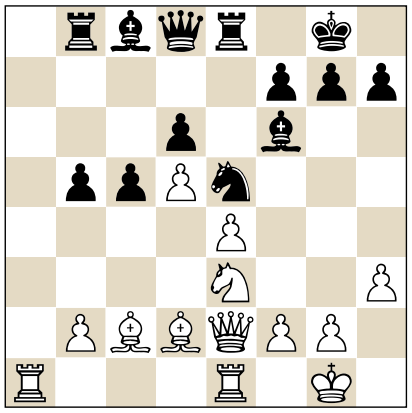
16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.f4 ♘g6 18.♘f3 ♗f6 is how David Anton had beaten Sutovsky just a few days before this!

**16...♖b8 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.axb5 axb5 19.♘f1**

This doesn't impress. It is actually likely that Topalov hadn't really expected to face this risky line, otherwise he would have had a more careful look at it.

19.f4 is usually the critical way, in the spirit of Sutovsky's game, but I am actually not sure if this is a better version than what Emil tried.

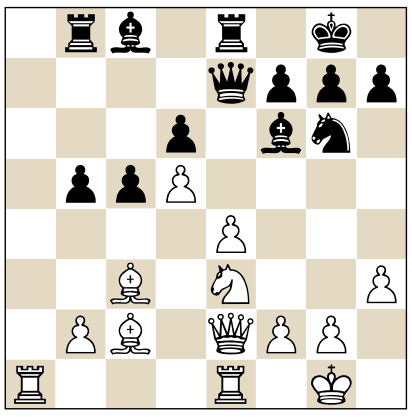
**19...♖e8 20.♘e3 ♗f6 21.♗d2 ♗c8**



**22.♗a5?!** A strange idea.

22.♖a7! first looks more challenging. A possible variation is 22...♖e7!? 23.♗a5 ♕e8 24.♗c7 ♖xc7!? 25.♖xc7 ♖a8, and the rook is trapped on c7, while the position after 26.f4!? is a complete chaos: 26...♘g6 27.e5!? ♘xf4! 28.♗xh7+! ♔f8!.

**22...♕e7 23.♗c3 ♘g6**



Now it has become clear that Black is enjoying a great Benoni. Topalov didn't manage to come back from this position, though there was no need to lose it so easily.

**24.♕f3 ♗xc3 25.bxc3 ♕g5 26.♔h2 h5!**

Fixing some more light squares.

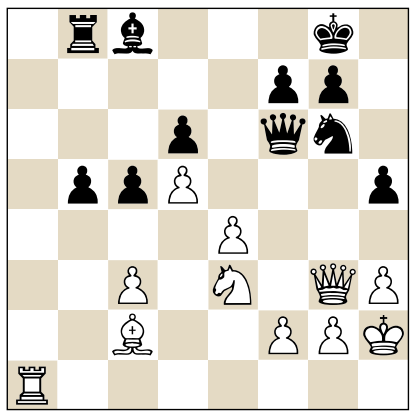
**27.♖a7 ♖e7 28.♖xe7 ♘xe7 29.♖a1?!**

29.♖b1! was a lot more unpleasant to face, threatening 30.♘c4!.

**29...♘g6 30.♕g3?**

30.♖a7 is the first move that comes to mind, and is indeed a much better option. After 30...♘e5 31.♕g3 ♕f6!? 32.h4! White is actually not doing that badly at all, although it is clear that Black continues to be the one having all the fun.

**30...♕f6!**



**31.♘f5?** Making it too easy for David Anton. Now White is left with a sad bishop. Any other move would have been better, keeping the knight and hoping for better times to come.

**31...♗xf5 32.exf5 ♘e5 33.♖b1 h4 34.♕f4 g5**

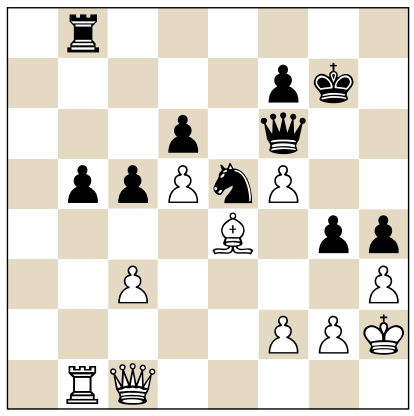
A flashy positional move, though by no means necessary.

**35.♕e3 ♘c4 36.♕c1 ♔g7**

White just has to wait now. His position is incredibly sad.

**37.♗d3 ♘e5 38.♗e4** It turns out taking on b5 is even worse: 38.♗xb5 ♕xf5, followed by ...c4 and ...g4. Black's position is totally crushing here.

**38...g4!**



**39.hxg4 ♘xg4+ 40.♔g1 ♕h6! 41.♕xh6+ ♔xh6 42.♔f1 ♔g5**

Topalov got so depressed that he simply resigned.

White's position is totally lost indeed, but actually I would have made a few more moves, just in case (at least till you are two pawns down). But it is true that David Anton had shown no signs of vulnerability, so there wasn't much hope anyway.

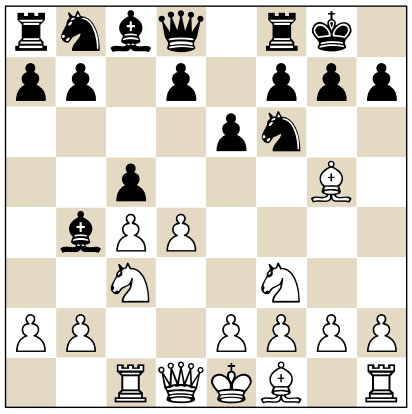
NOTES BY
**Hikaru Nakamura**

**Romain Edouard**
**Hikaru Nakamura**
Gibraltar 2017 (10)
Nimzo-Indian, Three Knights

Going into this last round game, I had Black and was trailing Anton Guijarro by half a point. I needed to win. I saw a post by Romain Edouard on Facebook after his fantastic win in Round 9 against Nigel Short which said that regardless of the last-round result, the tournament was a success! This gave me some extra confidence, and I knew that I would definitely get an interesting game with plenty of chances.

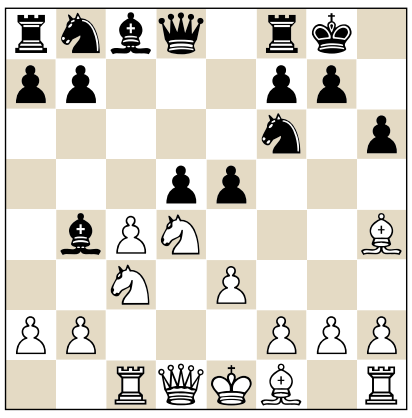
**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 0-0 5.♗g5 c5 6.♖c1**

I had two games against Magnus Carlsen from the position after 6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 d5 in the Paris and Leuven legs of the Grand Chess Tour.



**6...h6** 6...cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘c6 8.e3 h6 9.♗h4 is another topical line, featuring games with Aronian against both myself and Caruana from the Leuven Grand Chess Tour event.

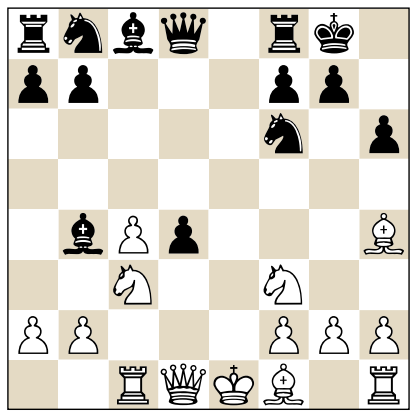
**7.♗h4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 d5 9.e3 e5**



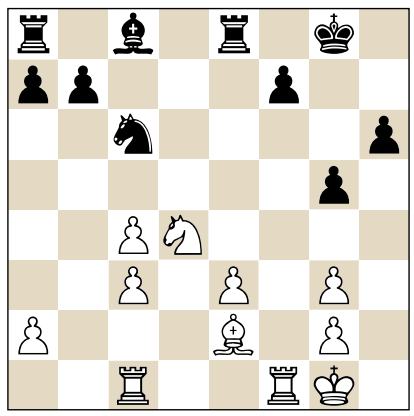
**10.♘f3** After 10.♘b3 g5 11.♗g3 ♘c6 12.a3 ♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 dxc4 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♗xc4 ♘e4 16.f3 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♔g7 Black has no problems whatsoever and can even fight for more, as was seen in Li Chao-Giri from the Tal Memorial in 2016.

**10...d4 11.exd4 exd4**

Surprisingly, at this point Romain went into a deep think. Oddly enough, this has been played before, but I am guessing that Romain simply had not had enough time to review all of his lines, since the final round had started at 11 a.m.



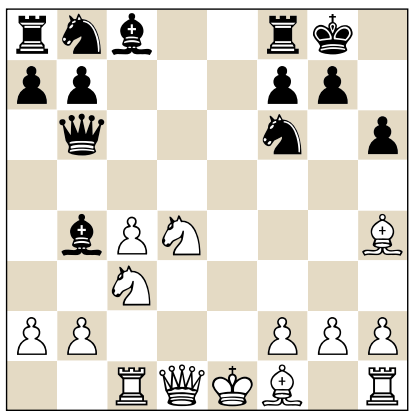
**12.♘xd4** A new move. After the game Romain told me that he simply could not see what the idea after this move was, except for 12.♕xd4, so he played it. 12.♕xd4 has been seen here: 12...g5 13.♗g3 ♖e8+ 14.♗e2 ♕e7 15.0-0 (after 15.♕e5 ♘c6 16.♕xe7 ♖xe7 Black had adequate compensation for the pawn in Babujian-Hovhannisyan, Tbilisi 2014) 15...♘c6 16.♕e3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♕xe3 18.fxe3 ♘e4 19.♘d4 ♘xg3 20.hxg3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now, in Melkumyan-Kuzubov, Lake Sevan 2014, Black played 20...♘e5!, and due to White's terrible pawn structure, Black is completely fine despite being an unimportant pawn down.

**12...♕b6!**



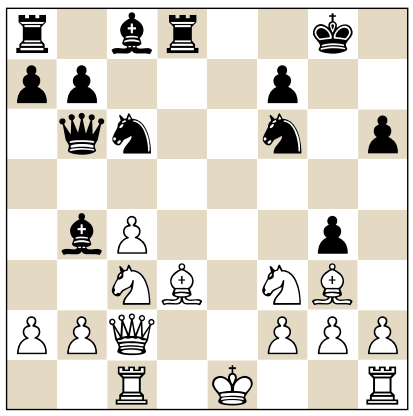
The point. I must admit that it's not an easy move to spot over the board.

**13.♘f3**

After 13.a3 ♖d8 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.axb4 ♖xd4 16.♕e2 ♗e6 17.♕e3 ♘c6 18.♗e2 ♘xb4 19.0-0 ♖ad8, Black has equalized and can fight for the advantage on the strength of his well-placed pieces and his control of the open d-file.

**13...♖d8 14.♕c2 g5 15.♗g3 ♘c6 16.♗d3 g4!?**

I played this after a very long think. It was hard to choose from the many attractive possibilities.



**17.♘h4?!**

Surprisingly, this natural move is wrong.

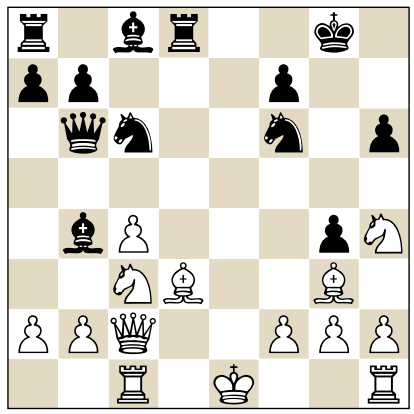
One reason that I used so much time before playing 16...g4 was the variation 17.♘d2 ♕d4 18.♘de4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 ♗xc3+ 20.bxc3 ♕xc4 21.♕e2 ♗e6 22.♕xc4 ♗xc4 23.f3, as I was worried that there might not be

**Gibraltar 2017**

| | | | | | TPR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | David Anton Guijarro | ESP | 2650 | 8 | 2859 |
| 2 | Hikaru Nakamura | USA | 2785 | 8 | 2847 |
| 3 | Yu Yangyi | CHN | 2738 | 8 | 2830 |
| 4 | Maxime Vachier-Lagrave | FRA | 2796 | 7½ | 2804 |
| 5 | Michael Adams | ENG | 2751 | 7½ | 2797 |
| 6 | Emil Sutovsky | ISR | 2628 | 7½ | 2759 |
| 7 | Ivan Cheparinov | BUL | 2689 | 7½ | 2755 |
| 8 | Veselin Topalov | BUL | 2739 | 7½ | 2749 |
| 9 | Boris Gelfand | ISR | 2721 | 7½ | 2729 |
| 10 | David Howell | ENG | 2655 | 7 | 2732 |
| 11 | Ju Wenjun | CHN | 2583 | 7 | 2731 |
| 12 | Nigel Short | ENG | 2675 | 7 | 2722 |
| 13 | Fabiano Caruana | USA | 2827 | 7 | 2709 |
| 27 | Varuzhan Akobian | USA | 2633 | 7 | 2709 |
| 15 | Maxim Matlakov | RUS | 2701 | 7 | 2699 |
| 16 | Arkadij Naiditsch | AZE | 2702 | 7 | 2696 |
| 17 | Nikita Vitiugov | RUS | 2724 | 7 | 2679 |
| 18 | Laurent Fressinet | FRA | 2660 | 7 | 2677 |
| 19 | Eduardo Iturrizaga | VEN | 2652 | 7 | 2675 |
| 20 | S.P. Sethuraman | IND | 2637 | 7 | 2673 |
| 21 | Peter Svidler | RUS | 2748 | 7 | 2671 |
| 22 | Babu M R Lalith | IND | 2587 | 7 | 2640 |
| 23 | Romain Edouard | FRA | 2613 | 7 | 2639 |
| 24 | Antoaneta Stefanova | BUL | 2512 | 6½ | 2659 |
| 25 | Bogdan-Daniel Deac | ROU | 2572 | 6½ | 2654 |
| 26 | Nitzan Steinberg | ISR | 2486 | 6½ | 2644 |
| 27 | Kateryna Lagno | RUS | 2530 | 6½ | 2634 |
| 28 | Anna Muzychuk | UKR | 2558 | 6½ | 2630 |
| 29 | Kacper Piorun | POL | 2651 | 6½ | 2619 |
| 30 | Daniel Fridman | GER | 2594 | 6½ | 2617 |
| 31 | Valentin Dragnev | AUT | 2492 | 6½ | 2613 |
| 32 | Sebastien Maze | FRA | 2613 | 6½ | 2612 |
| 33 | Daniele Vocaturo | ITA | 2606 | 6½ | 2611 |
| 34 | Leandro Krysa | ARG | 2491 | 6½ | 2609 |
| 35 | Samue Shankland | USA | 2674 | 6½ | 2603 |
| 36 | Igor Kovalenko | LAT | 2684 | 6½ | 2594 |
| 37 | Benjamin Gledura | HUN | 2589 | 6½ | 2565 |
| 38 | Miguel Santos Ruiz | ESP | 2484 | 6½ | 2564 |
| 39 | Vassily Ivanchuk | UKR | 2752 | 6½ | 2562 |
| 40 | Surya Shekhar Ganguly | IND | 2657 | 6½ | 2536 |
| 41 | Jean-Noel Riff | FRA | 2468 | 6½ | 2517 |
| 42 | Andrei Istratescu | FRA | 2593 | 6½ | 2504 |
| 43 | Anna Zatonskih | USA | 2443 | 6½ | 2501 |
| 44 | Valentina Gunina | RUS | 2524 | 6½ | 2491 |
| 45 | Jose Fernando Cuenca | ESP | 2492 | 6½ | 2481 |
| 46 | Victor Mikhalevski | ISR | 2504 | 6½ | 2430 |
| 47 | Alexander Huzman | ISR | 2557 | 6 | 2592 |
| 48 | Hou Yifan | CHN | 2651 | 6 | 2590 |
| 49 | G.N. Gopal | IND | 2579 | 6 | 2580 |
| 50 | Alexander Donchenko | GER | 2559 | 6 | 2565 |
| 51 | Mikhail Antipov | RUS | 2580 | 6 | 2562 |
| 52 | Jan-Christian Schröder | GER | 2550 | 6 | 2558 |
| 53 | Sergey Grigoriants | RUS | 2564 | 6 | 2539 |
| 54 | Fabien Libiszewski | FRA | 2545 | 6 | 2520 |

255 players, 10 rounds

many winning chances here. But I simply felt 16...g4 was the best move.



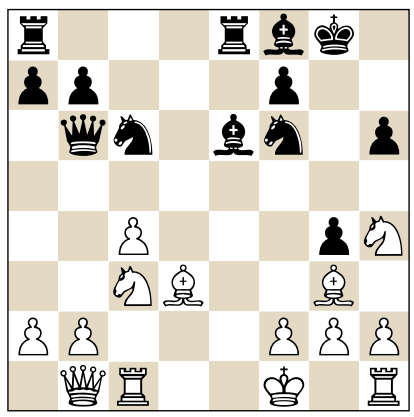
**17...♗f8?!**

The best move in the position was 17...♗a5!, but this is a total computer move and very counter-intuitive: 18.a3 (18.♕b1 ♕d4!, and Black is better here as well) 18...♘d4 19.♕b1 ♖e8+ 20.♔f1 ♘b3 21.♖d1 ♗e6. The engines give Black a large advantage, but this hardly seems clear at first glance, which is why sometimes you have to just trust the engines and accept that we all wish we were as good as them!

**18.♕b1 ♖e8+**

After 18...♕d4, with the bishop on f8 and not a5, White can simply play 19.♖d1, with a completely winning position, as the knight on c3 is no longer attacked.

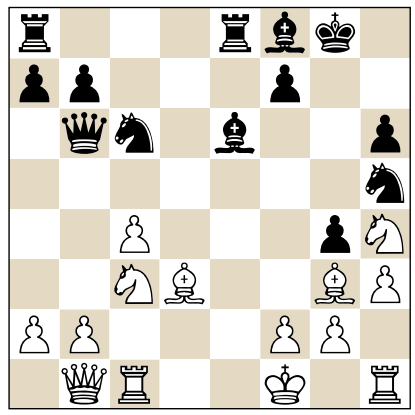
**19.♔f1 ♗e6**



**20.h3?**

20.♘f5 ♖ad8 21.♘e3 h5 22.♗h4 ♗g7 23.♖d1 ♘b4 24.♗e2 leads to a strange position that the engines call approximately equal. For human beings, however, this is a lot easier to play for White, as the burden of proof is on Black and it's not easy to prove anything, as White's pieces, except for the rook on h1, are almost ideally placed.

**20...♘h5**



**21.♘e4?**

The fatal blunder.

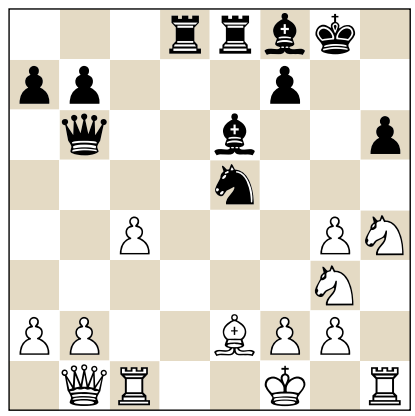
He should have played 21.♘f5 ♗xf5 22.♗xf5 ♘xg3+ 23.fxg3 ♖ad8 24.♘d5 ♖xd5 25.cxd5 ♘d4 26.♕d3 ♘e2! 27.♖c4 ♖e3 28.♖xg4+ ♗g7 29.♕c2 ♘xg3+ 30.♖xg3 ♖xg3, and after the smoke has cleared, Black is fractionally better, but White should be able to hold with correct play.

**21...♘xg3+**

After 21...f5!? 22.c5 ♕d8 23.♘d6 ♗xd6 24.cxd6 ♘xg3+ 25.fxg3 ♕xd6 26.hxg4 White appears to be holding on.

And after 21...gxh3 22.gxh3 ♗g7 the engines again give Black a large advantage, but this is simply computer chess, as no human would open the g-file without good reason.

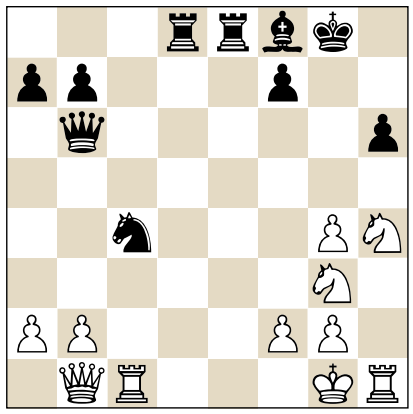
**22.♘xg3 ♖ad8 23.hxg4 ♘e5 24.♗e2**



**24...♗xg4?**

A big mistake, which gives White the opportunity to get back into the game.

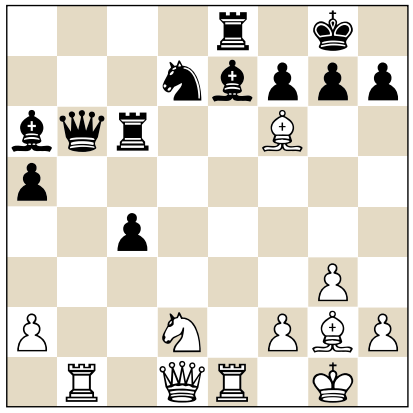
24...♗xc4 25.♗xc4 ♘xc4 26.♔g1



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

is what I saw during the game, and I thought White's king was secure and the knights would be coming to f5 and h5. However, there is one slight problem: 26...♕xf2+! 27.♔xf2 ♗c5+ 28.♔f3 ♘d2+ 29.♔f4 ♗e3+ 30.♔f5 ♖d5+ 31.♔f6 ♖e6 mate.

This motif is very similar to the game Krasenkow-Nakamura from Barcelona in 2007:



**Krasenkow-Nakamura**
position after 21.♗xf6

21...♕xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♗c5+ 23.♔f3 ♖xf6+ 24.♔g4 ♘e5+ 25.♔g5 ♖g6+ 26.♔h5 f6 27.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 28.♔h4 ♗c8, and before getting mated, White resigned.

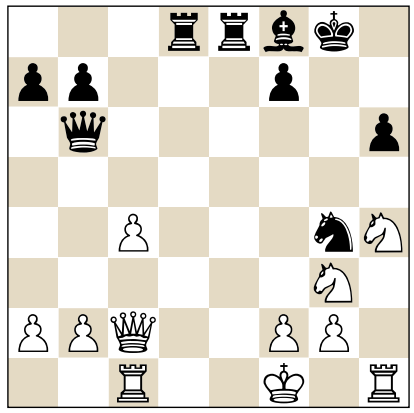
Back to Gibraltar, the line after 26.♕f5 (instead of 26.♔g1) isn't any better: 26...♕xb2 27.♖b1 ♕xb1+ 28.♕xb1 ♘d2+, and after 26.♖xc4 ♖d2 27.♖f4 ♕xb2 White can't protect the queen on b1 due to the back-rank mate threats.

**25.♗xg4?** After 25.♘f3 ♘g6 26.♕c2 ♗g7 Black is still better, but things are by no means clear.

**25...♘xg4 26.♕c2**

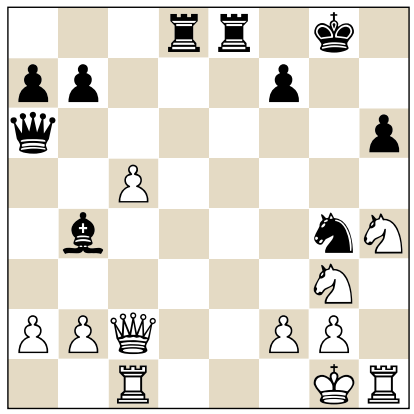
LENNART OOTES

**A post by Romain Edouard on Facebook gave Hikaru Nakamura some extra confidence before his last-round game against the Frenchman.**



**26...♗b4!** The move my opponent had missed when he went for this line with 25....♘xg4.

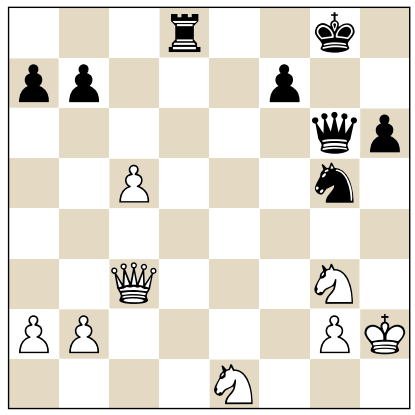
**27.c5 ♕a6+ 28.♔g1**



**28...♗e1**

28...♖e1+ 29.♖xe1 ♗xe1 30.♖h3 ♗xf2+ 31.♔h1 ♗xg3 wins slightly more quickly than what I did in the game.

**29.♖h3 ♗xf2+ 30.♔h1 ♖e1+ 31.♖xe1 ♗xe1 32.♘f3 ♘f2+ 33.♔h2 ♘xh3 34.♘xe1 ♘g5 35.♕c3 ♕g6**



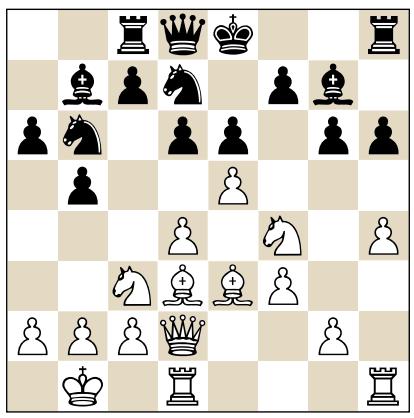
At this point, Romain resigned and I had qualified for the tiebreak against Yu Yangyi and David Anton Guijarro! ■

Chess Pattern Recognition

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

# Explosive pawn blocks

Reluctant or hesitant to change the pawn structure? Get ready to drop a brick and create some pawn tension!



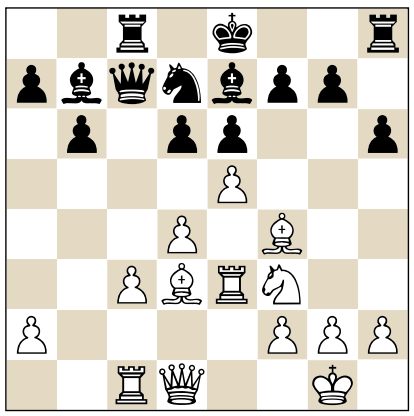
**Ponkratov-Petrosian**
Moscow 2015
position after 13...e6

**14.d5!** You may have been looking at sacrifices on e6 or g6, but this break serves the same goal: to exploit the black king's lingering in the middle. With all the captures that are likely to follow, the central lines will open. Obvious reasoning, but some calculation still needs to be done.

**14...♘xd5** The alternatives: 14...exd5 15.e6, and Black's position cracks immediately; 14...dxe5 is more complicated, but the straightforward 15.dxe6 exf4 16.exd7+ ♘xd7 17.♗xf4 0-0 18.♗xh6 should be more than sufficient; 14...♘xe5 15.♗xb6 cxb6 16.dxe6 0-0 might be best, but still leaves White clearly on top after 17.exf7+ ♖xf7 18.♘cd5.

**15.♘cxd5 ♗xd5 16.♘xd5 exd5 17.exd6!** Excellent! With two minor pieces exchanged, White's attack after 17.e6 fxe6 18.♗xg6+ ♔f8 lacks venom.

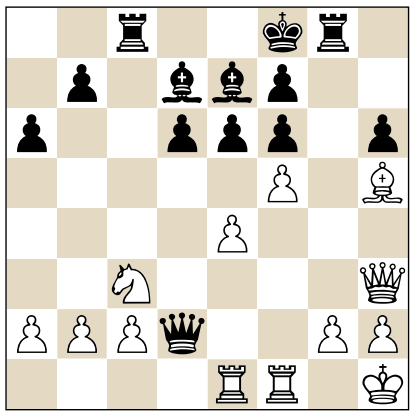
**17...♕f6 18.c3 ♕xd6 19.♖he1** Now Black chose to sit on his pawn with **19...♔f8,** and his offside rook on h8 guaranteed White a lot of freedom. Ponkratev eventually prevailed (1-0; 77); 19...0-0 20.♗xh6 would not have been much of a picnic either.



**Van de Oudeweetering-Blees**
**Netherlands 2001**
position after 14...h6

An enemy king lingering in the middle is a common incentive to create an explosive pawn block. Here I myself had the pleasure of blowing up the centre with **15.d5! ♗xd5 16.exd6 ♗xd6 17.♗xd6 ♕xd6,** and although I ended up successful after **18.♗a6,** 18.♗b5 would have been best. After 18...♔e7 19.♘d4 the unsafe position of the black king is troublesome. **18...♖c5 19.c4 ♕c7 20.♗b5 ♗xf3? 21.♖xf3 a6 22.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 23.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 24.♖xf7+ ♔d6 25.♖xg7 ♖hc8 26.♖d1+ ♔c6 27.♖g6 ♖e5 28.♖xh6 ♖d8 29.♖a1 ♖d4 30.h4 ♖xc4 31.g3 b5 32.♖h8 b4 33.♖c8+ ♔b5 34.a4+ bxa3 35.♖b1+ ♖b4 36.♖b8+ ♔a5 37.♖8xb4 a2 38.♔g2 ♖d5 39.♖4b2 axb1♕ 40.♖xb1 ♔a4 41.g4** 1-0.

One more example, albeit with a different structure, in which Nezhmetdinov blows away the doubled Rauzer f-pawns to score another win against a favourite opponent.



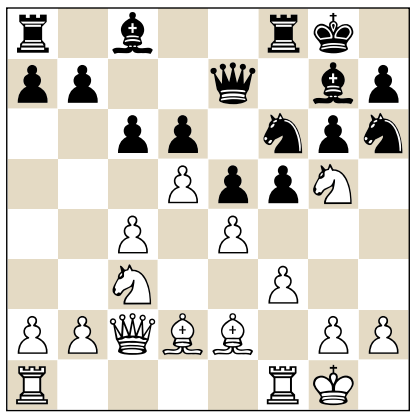
**Nezhmetdinov-Shamkovich**
Krasnodar 1957
position after 21...♕xd2

All white pieces are ready, while the offside position of Black's queen adds to his problems.

**22.e5!** Not too difficult for an imaginative player like Nezhmetdinov!

**22...♗c6** 22...dxe5 obviously fails to 23.♖d1. 22...exf5 23.exd6 ♕xd6 24.♖d1 ♕c7 25.♘d5 ♕d8 26.♗f3, with an overwhelming position. **23.♖e2 ♕g5 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.exf6 ♗xf6 26.♘e4! ♗xe4 27.♖xe4** And Black's exposed king rendered his position hopeless. **27...♖xc2 28.♖xe6 ♖f2 29.♖e8+ ♔g7 30.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 31.♕c8+ ♔g7 32.♖xf2 ♕xh5 33.♕xb7+ ♔g6 34.♕f3 ♕xf3 35.gxf3 ♔f5 36.♔g2 d5 37.♖c2 ♔f4 38.♔f2 a5 39.b3 h5 40.♔e2 ♗d4 41.♖c6 ♗g1** 1-0.

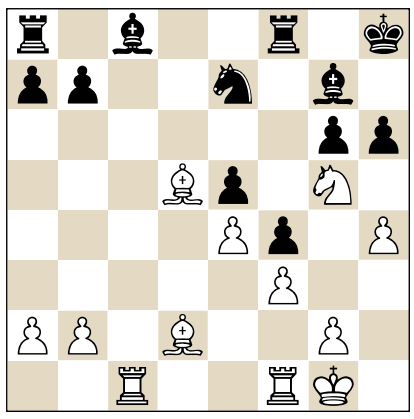
Enough assaults on the king. Let us turn to more positional goals. In King's Indian-like positions, explosive pawn blocks are not uncommon. White speeds up his play in the centre and on the queenside.



**Kortchnoi-Svidler**
St Petersburg 1997
position after 14...♘h6

Kortchnoi had just improved on an earlier successful game of his ('with only rare exceptions, I play the opening of every game as if for the first time in my life...') and now unleashed:

**15.c5!** Grabbing space and vacating square c4, in this case for the e2-bishop. **15...cxd5** Sure, Black can just take the pawn with 15...dxc5, which always adds to the surprise and charm of White's break, but after 16.dxc6 bxc6 (16...b6) 17.♘a4 ♘d7?! 18.♘e6 White is almost winning – Kortchnoi. **16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗c4 f4** 17...dxc5 18.♗xd5+ ♔h8 19.♖ac1 f4 20.h4 transposes to the game. **18.♗xd5+ ♔h8 19.h4 dxc5 20.♖ac1** Now White wins back the pawn, maintaining an overwhelming position. **20...♘g8 21.♕xc5 h6 22.♕xe7 ♘xe7** Now Kortchnoi comes up with a very elegant forcing sequence, which was abundantly praised by his opponent afterwards.

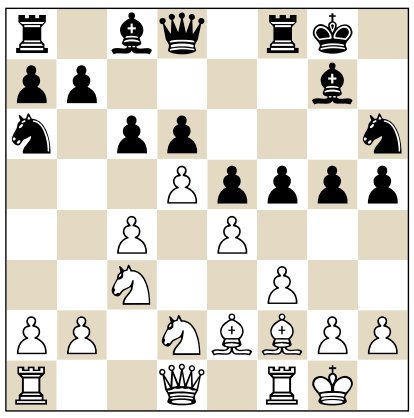


**23.♘f7+ ♔g8 24.♗b3 ♖xf7 25.♖c7 ♗f6 26.♗b4 ♔g7 27.♖fc1** Perhaps the nicest move of the lot. **27...a5 28.♗a3 b5 29.♗c5 ♗a6 30.♗xf7 ♔xf7 31.h5** And here Svidler resigned,

**'Surprisingly, setting up a similar pawn block can also be used as a defensive method to fight your opponent's apparent space advantage.'**

somewhat to Kortchnoi's surprise, although he admitted that it is hard to find a sensible move for Black. White will continue with ♗xe7 and ♖1c6, when Black's pieces are helpless.

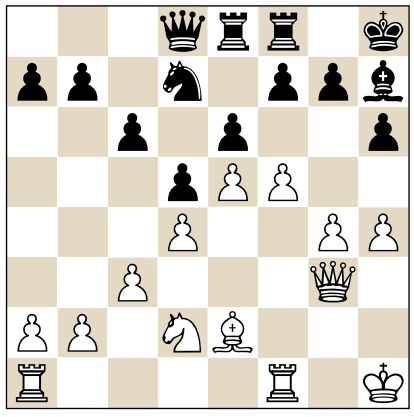
Here is another King's Indian position in which, typically, the black knight on a6 does not prevent the pawn push to c5. On the contrary, it also allows White to damage Black's pawn structure with ♗xa6.



**Ghaem Maghami-Mchedlishvili**
Bandar-e Anzali 2016
position after 14...f5

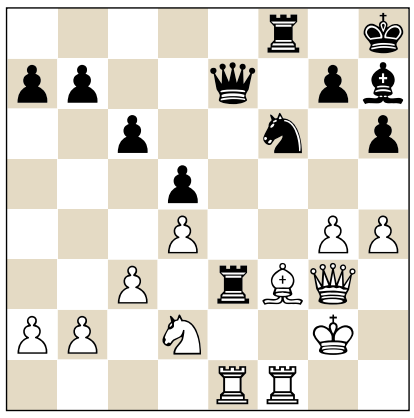
**15.c5!** The advance of the black kingside pawns seems far too slow now. **15...cxd5** 15...♘xc5 16.b4 ♘d7 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♘c4 is very good for White. **16.♗xa6 bxa6 17.♘xd5 ♘f7 18.♖c1 ♗e6 19.♘c4** Here it is the knight that typically uses the vacated c4-square. Already Black's position is virtually hopeless. **19...♗xd5 20.♕xd5 dxc5 21.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 22.exf5** and White won: **22...♘h6 23.♗e3 ♘xf5 24.♗xg5 ♖d5 25.♘e3 ♘xe3 26.♗xe3 ♗f8 27.b3 ♔f7 28.♖c4 ♖ad8 29.♔f2 ♖d1 30.♖a4 ♖1d6 31.♖c1 ♖c6 32.♔e2 ♔e6 33.♖h4 ♔d5** 1-0.

Surprisingly, setting up a similar pawn block can also be used as a defensive method to fight your opponent's apparent space advantage.



**Van Kampen-Navara**
Bilbao 2014
position after 21.♕g3

**21...f6!** A typical defensive move. White seemed to have a solid initiative going, but now that the centre will be opened, it becomes clear that the black pieces are better placed. White's king, on the other hand, will become a liability. **22.exf6 ♘xf6 23.fxe6 ♖xe6 24.♖ae1 ♕e7 25.♗f3 ♖e3!? 26.♔g2?** As Black is taking over the initiative, White – failing to adjust – overlooks a tactical blow.



**26...♘xg4** Ouch! Game over. **27.♔h1 ♗e4 28.♕xg4 ♖fxf3 29.♘xe4 ♕xe4 30.♕xe4 ♖xe4 31.♖xe4 ♖xf1+ 32.♔g2 dxe4 33.♔xf1 g5 34.hxg5 hxg5 35.♔f2 g4** 0-1.

So, dare to create some pawn tension when you need it! ■

# Still Writing in Agon(y)

A couple of years ago or so I decided, for the sake of my sanity, to try and distance myself emotionally from the dystopian nightmare that is world chess. It worked to a degree: my humble attempts at Zen-like detachment brought both lower blood-pressure and a modicum of contentedness. However, the sheer egregiousness of the current FIDE maladministration is such that one would either have to be catatonic, or dead, not to care about the deplorable depths to which the game has sunk.

Kirsan's contemptible con stands on a number of pernicious pillars. Expectations are now so low that people are grateful when anything happens at all. Take, for example, the notorious decision to award the Women's World Chess Championship to Tehran. As women, and only women, are compelled to wear the Islamic hijab (shamefully, for a supposed sporting body, even while playing!), the event is in obvious violation of FIDE's statute 1.2 which forbids discrimination on the grounds of religion and gender. It is also a flagrant breach of the IOC Code of Ethics, which potentially could have led to expulsion from that body, with disastrous consequences for a number of federations which depend on government funding. And had FIDE, whose finances are already in a parlous condition, been taken to the Court of Sports Arbitration in Lausanne by, say, a women's rights organization, the costs of litigation would have been ruinous.

The worldwide media storm over this issue was met, conspicuously, with barely a murmur from the FIDE kakokrats in Athens. When in difficulty, it is usually wise to utter as little as possible. However, they did proffer one vaguely plausible-sounding defence: Iran provided the sole bid, which had been unanimously approved by the ovine Delegates – a fact which assuaged many of the grumblers.

It shouldn't have. Rather than asking why FIDE constantly fails to attract adequate commercial sponsorship (having a toxic President on the US Treasury Department sanctions list is just one, albeit important, part of it), the browbeaten, downtrodden hoi polloi are so crushed by decades of oppression that they are grateful for whatever miserable crumbs they are tossed.

Closer examination of the procedure which led to this odious circumstance reveals predictably troubling details. The agenda for the September 2016 Baku General Assembly, suspiciously, makes no mention whatsoever of an Iranian bid, which appeared, metaphorically out of a hat, during an otherwise bland, technical announcement. As a former Delegate, I can tell you how difficult it is to deliver an extemporaneous speech against a specific proposal, particularly when you have nothing else to offer as an alternative. It is no wonder that this apparent ambush passed without objection. The question, as ever with the current, baleful incumbency, is 'Cui bono?'

One need look no further than the supreme autarch, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov himself. He conducts plenty of business in the Islamic Republic. It is an open secret in chess circles (but not the Iranian press) that he surreptitiously met with the Iranian Oil Minister (an interesting petro-echo of his contacts with Saddam Hussein and Colonel Qaddafi) on the 1st day of the Stars Cup, in July last year. Indeed, he has conducted numerous subsequent visits to the country that have little or nothing to do with chess, although he usually manages a brief speech or photo-opportunity, presumably so that he can charge his bloated expenses and those of his omnipresent sidekick, Berik Balgabaev, to the FIDE account. Four Russian businessmen, with no connection to the noble game, accompanied Kirsan on his latest trip. As usual, chess, for the sublime Kalmyk despot, is merely a tool to further his own interests. Rather than being unable to find a different venue, it is more likely that Kirsan never even wanted it.

If this would be all that ails the chess world, it would be bad enough, but, alas, it is the mere surface of a deep, foul, stinking cesspit. A recent announcement from the opaque, off-shore company Agon Ltd., about the 2017 FIDE Grand Prix, particularly caught my eye. Nine wild-card entries (out of a total of 24 competitors) are up for sale at €100,000 apiece. This grotesque piece of rent-seeking is laughably labeled as 'sponsorship'. As an inducement to buy-in, €20,000 is returned to the player and €15,000 to the federation. That's right: Agon kindly offers 'only' to keep 2/3 of the large sums of money you raise on its behalf.

This might be a good moment to recapitulate some of the things we know about Agon. It was founded by Andrew Paulson – an American businessman – in Jersey,

the Channel Islands, in January of 2012. Paulson was legally the 100% owner. An official agreement was signed between Ilyumzhinov (representing FIDE) and Paulson, on the 20th February 2012, awarding the commercial rights of flagship FIDE events (the Olympiad excepted) to Agon. In breach of the agreement, Agon failed to pay $500,000 to FIDE within 60 days of the signing of the contract. The agreement was nevertheless ratified at the September 2012 Istanbul General Assembly – with Paulson responding to a question from the floor that the errant $500,000 would be paid immediately, once the Delegates gave their assent. It was not. At the 1st quarter Presidential Board meeting of 2013, the Board dismissed the proposal of Silvio Danailov to cancel the contract with Agon. At the 2nd quarter meeting of 2013, the FIDE Presidential Board approved the proposal of Georgios Makropoulos – to authorise the FIDE President to take the personal decision as whether to terminate the contract with Agon. Kirsan decided to keep it.

If Kirsan were a disinterested custodian of FIDE's interests, the decision to forego a contractually-owed half a million dollars was almost inexplicable. If Kirsan had a major personal financial interest in Agon, however, the decision not to pay money out of his own pocket to FIDE made perfect sense. The latter hypothesis gained considerable weight with the publication, in 2014, of the hitherto secret 'Agon Memorandum'. The signed document – leaked, apparently, by a former disgruntled employee of Agon's – purported to show Kirsan as the majority owner of the company, with various FIDE bigwigs, including the aforementioned Greek Deputy President, as major beneficiaries.

While no attempt has ever been made to dispute the genuineness of the document – indeed Kirsan openly acknowledged at the 2014 General Assembly that the signature was his – FIDE has vociferously maintained that it was only one of several drafts and that the Memorandum has never been in force. Whether this repudiation is true or not, immoral, if not to say illegal, conflicts of interest, however, would be nothing new for the FIDE President. In June 2016, thanks to disclosures in the leaked Panama Papers, the Guardian newspaper was able to how show how Ilyumzhinov had previously acquired complete control of lucrative commercial rights through his ownership of Global Chess BV, before later selling on his stake to the murky British Virgin Island registered company, Chess Lane Ltd.

**'Rather than being unable to find a different venue, it is more likely that Kirsan never even wanted it.'**

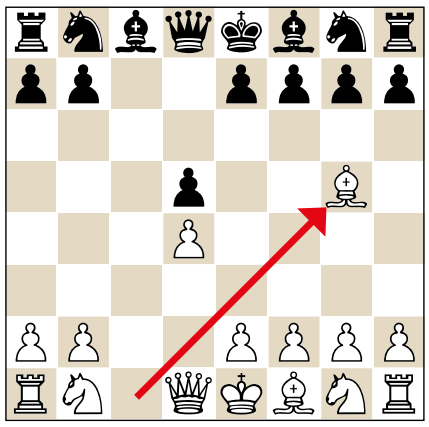
Other neglected evidence has emerged which sheds important light on Agon. At the end of 2014, it was announced that the company had been sold to Ilya Merenzon for the sum of one pound. Merenzon, incidentally, is listed, along with Andrew Paulson, in the official February 2012 FIDE-Agon contract (available on the FIDE website), as one of the two contacts for the company. In an interview on *chess-news.ru*, which has received rather less attention than it deserves, Merenzon explained the background to his purchase:

'Initially, I wasn't the owner of Agon, holding only the minority interest. The owner was Andrew Paulson. That was me who had helped him to get in touch with Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. And they both were the sides to have signed the contract, while I was only partly involved.'

This short, candid statement is remarkable for a number of different reasons. Firstly, it flatly contradicts Paulson's repeated claim that he was the 100% owner. Secondly, the FIDE General Assembly was never made aware of Merenzon's minority interest. Thirdly, and most significantly, as Merenzon appears as the holder of 10% of the non-voting shares, his testimony supports the conjecture that the signed Agon Memorandum (or something close to it) was in effect – for at least a time. If so, the implications are immense.

The next time you baulk at the high cost of entrance tickets, or 'Premium Membership' for some mediocre online service, or see Agon attempting to extort money out of a website for merely relaying the moves of the World Chess Championship, perhaps you should reflect upon how this has come into being. Only two FIDE officials have legal access to Agon accounts. Executive Director, Nigel Freeman, who is known to withhold vital information on federation financial arrears (and hence voting eligibility) in election years, and Georgios Makropoulos, who features prominently as a beneficiary in the leaked Memorandum, are the keepers of these secrets. The disgraceful arrangement has all the transparency of a black hole. For the good of the game, this must change. Now. ■

**'The browbeaten, downtrodden hoi polloi are so crushed by decades of oppression that they are grateful for whatever miserable crumbs they are tossed.'**



4.♗g5!?

**‘GREAT SOS IDEA: Exchange Slav 4.♗g5! It’s FANTASTIC! If 4...♘f6 then 5.♗xf6! It’s the structure, stupid! #MakeYourChessGreatAgain’**

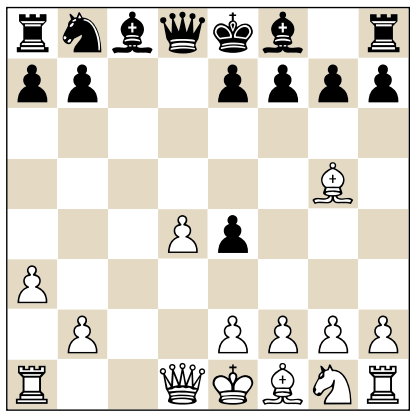
# Tromping the Slav

Jeroen Bosch

As a sign of the times, I was tempted to restrict my column to something well within 140 characters. Borrowing from a couple of American presidents it would run like this:
GREAT SOS IDEA: Exchange Slav 4.♗g5! It’s FANTASTIC! If 4...♘f6 then 5.♗xf6!. It’s the structure, stupid! #MakeYourChessGreat Again
However understandable our desire for clarity, things are usually slightly more complicated in practice. Still, the essence of the idea that we are investigating is as simple as it is attractive. Just as in the Trompowsky and in the nameless 1.d4 d5 2.♗g5, we want to kill the knight that comes to f6, inflicting structural damage on our opponent in the meantime. The positions we will investigate below are similar to a line from the Richter-Veresov, but without the c-pawns. This should favour White: the c3-knight in front of the c-pawn always looks a little stupid in that opening.
An added advantage of our surprise weapon against the Slav is that it is not dealt with by the theory. Thus Boris Avrukh, in what arguably is one of the greatest repertoire books on the Slav (*The Classical Slav*, Quality Chess 2014), mentions that Black should meet 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♗g5 with 5...♘e4!, but he doesn’t mention 4.♗g5!.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.♗g5**

Many of the games that I mention below came about via the move order 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♗g5 ♘c6 6.♗xf6.
However, as mentioned above, the problem is that Black has the powerful 5...♘e4! 6.♘xe4 (in case of 6.♗f4 Black has many sensible replies, but Avrukh gives the novel pawn sacrifice 6...e5!?, when 7.♗xe5 ♕a5 8.♕b3 ♗b4 9.♖c1 ♘c6 10.♘f3 0-0 promises good play for the pawn) 6...dxe4 7.a3, and White isn’t fighting for an advantage here, since Black has a pleasant choice between:



– 7...♕d5 8.♗h4 ♘c6 (8...e3!? was Ivanisevic-Giri, Baku 2016) 9.e3 e5, Perelshteyn-Ramirez, St Louis 2011, and
– 7...h6 8.♗f4 (8.♗h4 ♕b6 is also fine for Black - Avrukh) 8...♘c6 9.d5 e5!, Kazakovskiy-Kollars, Kirishi 2016.
1.d4 d5 2.♗g5 c5 3.c3 cxd4 4.cxd4 is another way of reaching our SOS - the late Taimanov used this move order, by the way.
1.d4 d5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗g5 c5 4.♗xf6 gxf6 5.e3 is a line of the Richter-

Veresov that is somewhat similar to our SOS-Slav.

Now I propose to deal mainly with

Variation A) 4...h6, and

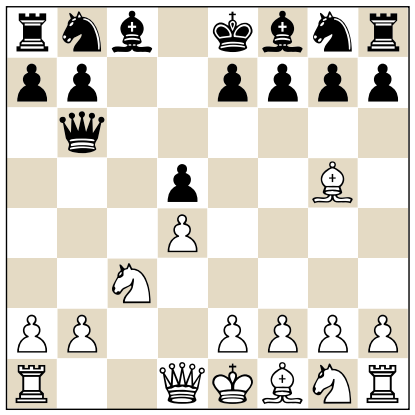
Variation B) 4...♘f6.

However, let's first investigate a few minor options. Please note that play transposes to our main line after 4...♘c6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♗xf6.

It is understandable that Black wants to develop his king's knight to f6 without allowing any damage to his pawn structure, but after 4...♘d7 the queen's knight is really misplaced, as is well-known from the Slav Exchange.

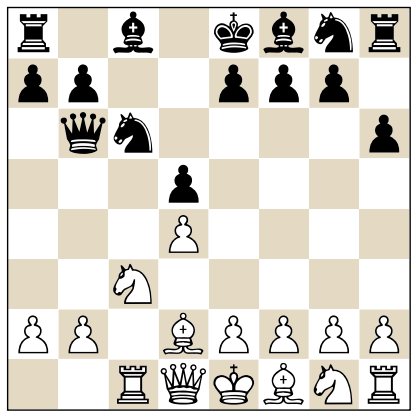
White gains an edge with the simple 5.♘c3 ♘gf6 6.e3 e6 7.♗d3 ♗d6 8.f4 a6 9.♘f3 b5 10.♘e5 ♗b7 11.0-0, Raznikov-Reshef, Pardubice 2015.

If White can sin against the opening rule 'knights before bishops', then Black might like to sin against the rule that says 'don't bring your queen out early in the game' with 4...♕b6 5.♘c3



White wins after 5...♕xb2? 6.♘xd5 ♘a6 7.e4. Instead, 5...e6 6.♕d2 ♗d7 7.e3 ♘f6 (7...♗e7 8.♗xe7 ♘xe7 9.♗d3⩲) 8.♗xf6! gxf6 9.♗d3 ♘c6 was Hegedus-Gal, Aggtelek 1998, and now I believe that 10.♘f3 is slightly better for White (and rather similar to positions we will investigate below).

Interesting is 5...h6!? but White might like to take advantage of the queen on b6 by means of 6.♖c1!? (or just 6.♗h4, which transposes to 4...h6 5.♗h4 ♕b6 6.♘c3 below) 6...♘c6 (the rook wreaks havoc on Black's first rank after 6...hxg5? 7.♘xd5 ♕a5+ 8.b4 ♕xd5 9.♖xc8+ ♔d7 10.♖xf8, and 7...♕d8 8.♘c7+ ♔d7 9.♘xa8 e6 10.♕a4+ ♘c6 11.♖xc6! bxc6 12.♕xa7+ likewise wins for White), and now the modest 7.♗d2



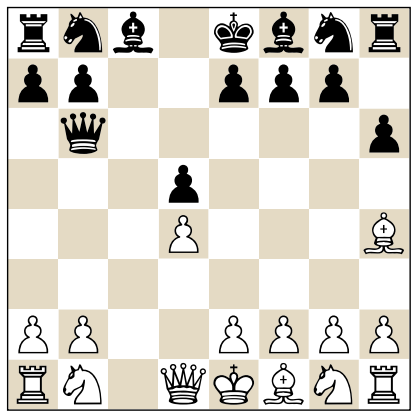
when:

– 7...♘f6 8.♘f3 ♗f5 9.♘a4 is annoying for Black (♘c5 and ♘e5 are in the air), while

– 7...e6 8.♘f3 ♘f6 9.e3 ♗d6 10.♗d3 0-0 11.0-0 ♗d7 12.♘a4 ♕d8 13.♘c5 isn't much, but still a tad better for White.

## Variation A

It makes sense to remove the bishop from the c1-g5 diagonal with **4...h6 5.♗h4** as now **5...♕b6**

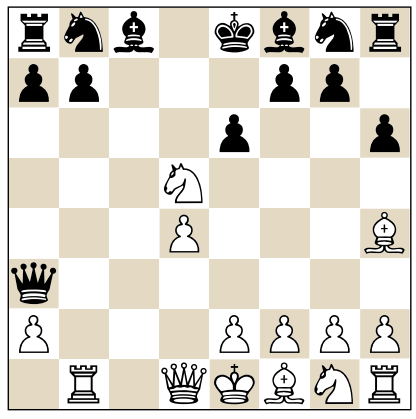


is more annoying (the bishop cannot return to d2). Clearly, 5...g5 6.♗g3 will always give White a target on the kingside.

Now 6.♕d2 is nothing because of 6...e5! 7.♘c3 (7.dxe5? ♗b4 8.♘c3 d4∓) 7...♗e6 8.e3 exd4 9.♗b5+ (the game is even after 9.exd4) 9...♘c6 10.♕xd4 ♕xd4 11.exd4 ♖c8 12.♘ge2 a6 13.♗xc6+ ♖xc6, and Black was slightly better in Taimanov-Lugovoi, St Petersburg 1996.

Therefore White continues with **6.♘c3 e6**

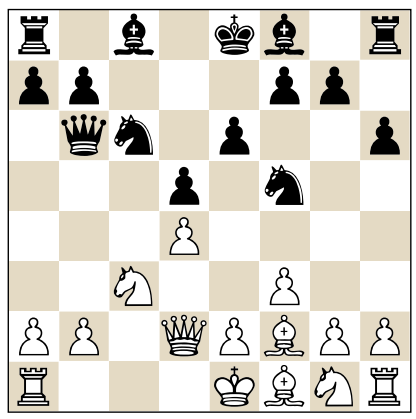
Taking on b2 is slightly better for White after 6...♕xb2 7.♘xd5 e6! 8.♖b1 ♕a3



9.♕c2! (Black has a perpetual after 9.♘c7+ ♔d7 10.♘xa8 ♗b4+ 11.♖xb4 ♕xb4+ 12.♕d2 ♕b1+) 9...♕a5+ 10.♕c3.

**7.♕d2 ♘c6**

The main alternative is 7...♘e7 8.f3 (or 8.e3 ♘f5 9.♗g3 ♘c6 10.♘f3, and even though Black can obtain the bishop pair, I would prefer White: Black's light-squared bishop isn't going anywhere any time soon) 8...♘f5 9.♗f2 ♘c6



– 10.e3 ♗b4?! 11.♗d3 ♘a5 12.♘ge2 ♘d6 13.0-0 is slightly better for White, Sarkar-Shabalov, New York 2004. However, the less ambitious 10...♗e7 should be about equal, which is why I would prefer:

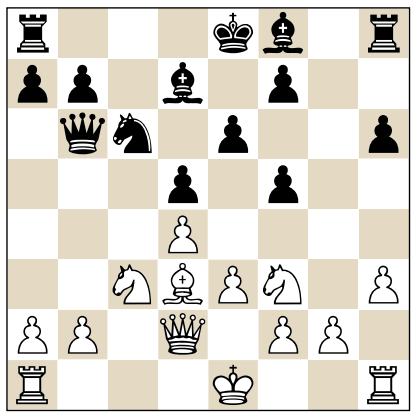
– 10.♖d1!?, planning e4, when 10...♘fxd4?! 11.e4! favours White, since 11...♗c5 can be met by 12.♘a4 when 12...♗b4 (12...♘c2+ 13.♕xc2 ♗xf2+ 14.♕xf2 ♕b4+ 15.♘c3 d4 16.a3 ♕a5 17.♖xd4±) 13.♘xb6 axb6 14.exd5 exd5 15.♕xb4 ♘c2+ 16.♔d2

♘2xb4 17.a3 ♘a6 18.♗xb6 is a better endgame for White.

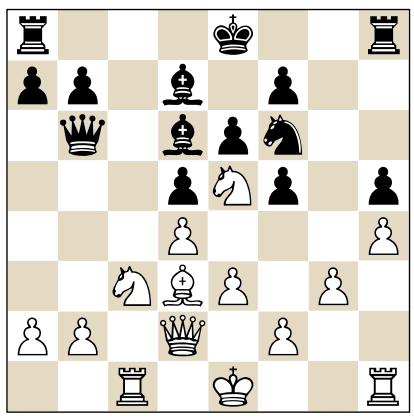
**8.e3 ♗d7 9.♘f3**

9.♗d3 ♖c8 10.♘f3 ♗e7!? 11.♗xe7! (11.♗g3 ♘f6 12.0-0 0-0 is a tiny edge, too) 11...♘gxe7 12.♘a4 ♕b4 13.♘c5 b6 14.♘xd7 ♕xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♔xd7 16.♗a6!, and the endgame slightly favours White (who has a bishop, after all), Nabaty-Rodshtein, Beer-Sheva 2013.

**9...♘f6 10.♗xf6! gxf6 11.♗d3 f5 12.h3**



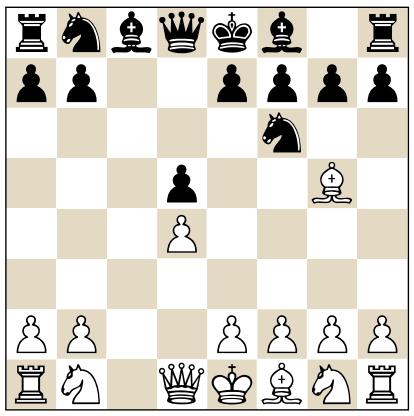
Toying with the idea of g2-g4, and provoking **12...h5 13.h4! ♗d6 14.g3 ♘e7 15.♖c1** This is once again a slight edge; after the re-grouping of the knight with **15...♘g8!?** White has **16.♘e5! ♘f6** Nabaty-Cerveny, Pardubice 2013, and now



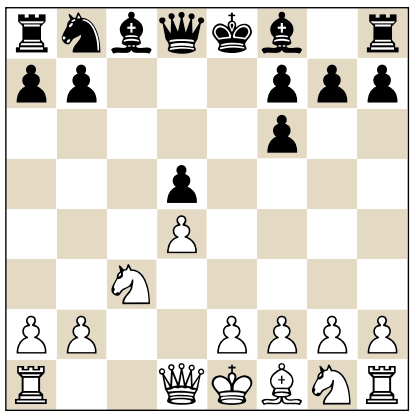
17.♘xd7! preserves White's plus. The game continuation 17.f3 ♗c6 was less clear.

## Variation B

**4...♘f6** This allows the trade of the bishop for the knight and leads to a position that is at least a lot easier to play for White.



**5.♗xf6 gxf6** This is more double-edged than 5...exf6 6.♘c3.

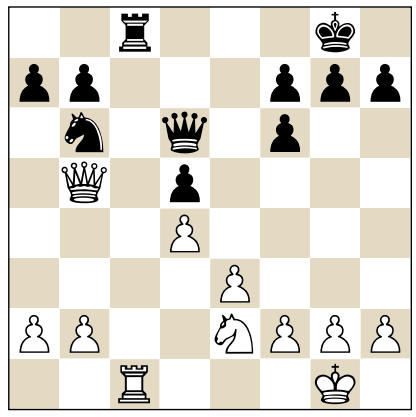


A few practical examples:

– 6...♗e6 7.g3 (7.e3) 7...♕b6 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.e3 0-0-0 10.♗g2 g5 11.♘ge2 f5 (11...h5 12.h4 ♔b8, unclear), Schirbel-Gerigk, Germany 1999, and now 12.h4, with a white edge.

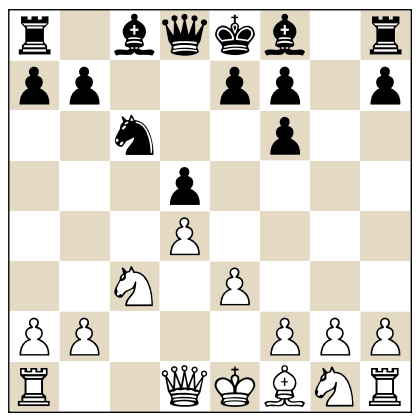
– 6...♘c6 7.e3 ♗b4 (7...♗e6) 8.♖c1 0-0 9.♗d3 g6 (instead, 9...f5 10.♕f3!? ♕f6?! 11.♘ge2 ♗e6 12.a3 gave Black no compensation for his inferior structure in Eiber-Hohner, Fürth 2002) 10.♘ge2 ♘e7 11.0-0 a6 12.♕b3 ♕d6?! (12...♗d6) 13.♘f4 ♗e6, Hoang-Havaskori, Budapest 2006, and now 14.♘a4! is an even more substantial plus than the game continuation 14.♗e2 (intending ♗f3).

– 6...♗b4 7.♖c1 0-0 8.e3 ♗f5 9.♗d3! (keeping it simple. White just wants to exchange pieces and make the weakness of pawn d5 the only issue that matters) 9...♗xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘d7 (10...♘c6 11.♘ge2 ♘e7 12.♕b5±) 11.♕b5! ♗xc3+ 12.♖xc3 ♘b6 13.♘e2 ♖c8 14.0-0 ♖xc3 15.♘xc3 ♕d6 16.♖c1 ♖c8 17.♘e2.



Everything according to plan. Pawn d5 remains a structural weakness and White's queen and knight will be active while Black has to defend passively. 17...♖xc1+ 18.♘xc1 g6 19.♘d3 ♕e6 20.h3 ♔g7 21.♘c5 and White converted his strategic plus in Bauer-Svane, Basel 2017. A model game from White's perspective.

**6.♘c3 ♘c6 7.e3**

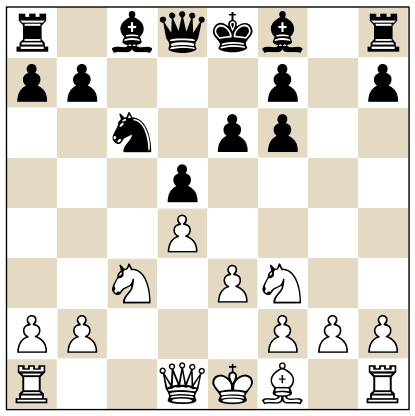


As mentioned above, in the Richter-Veresov the same position occurs but then with pawns on c2 and c5 added. Clearly the difference should favour White (although it is true that plans with castling queenside no longer exist for White).

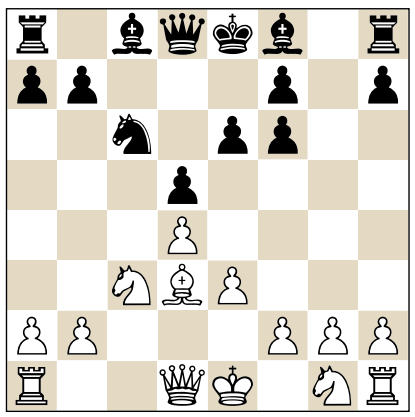
**7...e6** 7...a6 8.g3 ♗f5 9.♗g2 e6 10.♘ge2 h5 11.h4 ♕b6 12.0-0 ♗d6 (12...♕xb2 13.e4!±) 13.♘a4 ♕c7 14.♖c1 ♖g8 15.♘f4 ♗xf4 16.exf4 0-0-0 17.♘c5 e5? 18.fxe5 fxe5 eventually ended in a draw in Kalisvaart-Wang, Edmonton 2013, but at this stage 19.dxe5! is more or less winning.

**8.♗d3**

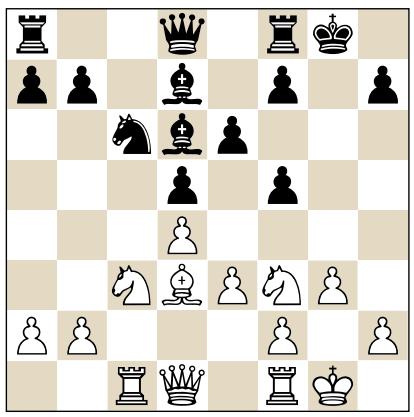
White keeps the king's knight flexible for the moment, although it will usually end up on f3 anyway. The immediate 8.♘f3 has also been played:



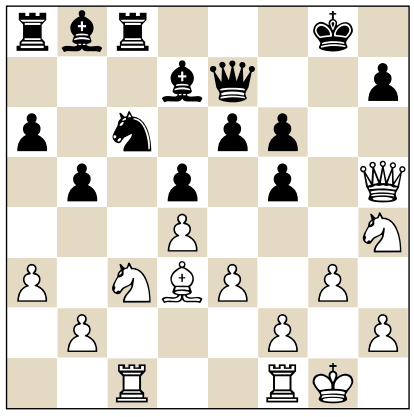
Two examples:
– 8...♗d7 9.♗d3 f5 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.a3 ♗d6 12.0-0 (12.g3) 12...0-0 13.♘a4? (a tactical mistake that Black fails to exploit) 13...b6? (13...♘xd4!∓) 14.♘c3 ♘e7 15.♕e2 ♘g6, Ivanisevic-Predojevic, Zlatibor 2006, and now 16.g3 is our typical slight plus again.
– 8...a6 9.♖c1 ♗e7 10.♗e2 (10.♗d3) 10...♗d7 11.0-0 ♕a5 12.a3± f5 13.♘d2 b5 14.♘b3 ♕b6 15.♗d3 ♗d6 16.♕h5 ♘e7 17.♘c5, and with a dominating knight and a superior structure, White is clearly up for preference: 17...♖d8 (17...♗xc5? 18.dxc5± ♕xc5?? 19.♘xb5+−) 18.b4 ♗xc5 19.dxc5 ♕b7 20.♘e2 ♘c6 21.f4 ♖c8 22.♘d4 ♖b8 23.♖f3 ♕c7 24.♕h6, and White won in Perelshteyn-Sevian, Mashantucket 2014.



**8...♗d6**
The logical developing move.
It no longer makes much sense to attack b2, since 8...♕b6 can be met by 9.♖b1 and, even better, by 9.a3, when, as so often, b2 is poisoned.
The immediate 8...f5 also makes sense. 9.h3 (9.♘f3 will probably transpose to our main line) 9...♗d7 10.g4?!, when Black should have gone 10...f4! 11.♘f3 (11.exf4? ♘xd4 12.♗xh7? ♕f6 13.♗d3 ♕xf4∓) 11...fxe3 12.fxe3 ♗d6. The game Nabaty-Matsenko, Pardubice 2013, went 10...fxg4 11.hxg4 h6 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.f4!? ♕b6 14.♖h2 ♗g7 15.♘f3 a6 16.♔f1 ♕a5 17.a3, with a slight edge.
**9.♘f3 f5** Another Perelshteyn effort saw 9...a6 10.♖c1 ♗d7 11.0-0 ♖c8 12.a3 f5 13.g3 ♕f6 14.♘a4! (as so often in the Slav Exchange, the knight manoeuvre to c5/b6 is very annoying) 14...h5 15.♘b6 (or 15.♘c5) 15...♖c7 16.♘h4!? ♘e7?! (16...f4?! 17.♔h1!; 16...♕d8, planning 17...♗e7, was best) 17.♖xc7 ♗xc7 18.♘xd7! ♔xd7 19.♕a4+ ♔c8 20.♖c1 ♔b8, and now 21.♖c3 ♘c8 22.♕d7 was much better for White in Perelshteyn-Yearwood, Victoria 2012, but 21.♗xa6! bxa6? 22.♕b4+ ♔c8 23.♕b6 would have meant an immediate win.
**10.g3** The other plan to prepare g4 with 10.h3!? is playable, too. If Black responds with 10...h5, White goes 11.h4! ♗d7 12.g3, when Black's structure on the kingside is fixed (and weak). White had a slight plus after 12...♘e7 13.♕b3 ♕b6 14.♕xb6 axb6, which he managed to convert in Ivanisevic-Kalinin, Sozina 2004.
**10...♗d7 11.♖c1 0-0 12.0-0**



The opening is over. Neither side has any pawn breaks in the foreseeable future. It's better to have a pair of knights in such a position than a pair of bishops. Objectively, there isn't all that much going on, but White has ideas on both the queenside and the kingside, and his position is easier to play.
**12...♕e7 13.a3 ♖fc8 14.♘b5**
White chases the dark-squared bishop away and disturbs Black's coordination. He wants to provoke ...a7-a6, when a subsequent ♘b5-c3-a4 will eye the weakened c5- and b6-squares.
**14...♗b8 15.♘h4!? a6 16.♘c3 b5** In case of 16...♗d6 White also goes 17.♕h5!, when a typical sacrifice can no longer be prevented by Black: 17...♕f6 18.♘xf5! exf5 19.♘xd5 ♕d8 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.♕xf5, and with three pawns for the bishop White has a long-term edge here.
Best was 16...♗c7, which avoids immediate disaster after 17.♕h5 ♗d8!±, when the sacrifice is best avoided for the moment: 18.♘xf5?! exf5 19.♗xf5 (19.♘xd5 ♕e6 20.♘f4 ♕f6) 19...♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♕e6 21.♕xd5 ♘a5!, with counterplay.
**17.♕h5** Even the immediate 17.♘xf5 exf5 18.♘xd5 favours White, since he wins material following 18...♕d6 19.♘b6±.
**17...f6?** Asking for it, but after 17...♕d6 White has 18.f4!, and due to the threat of 19.g4 he is better.



**18.♘xf5! exf5 19.♘xd5 ♕d8** White also wins after 19...♕f7 20.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 21.♘b6. **20.♕h6** Also winning is 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.♕xf5. **20...♔h8 21.♘xf6 ♕e7 22.♘xd7 ♕xd7 23.♕f6+ ♕g7 24.♖xc6** White has retrieved his piece and will soon be four pawns up, Perelshteyn-Sveshnikov, Beijing rapid 2008.

In conclusion, 4.♗g5!? is an interesting weapon in the Exchange Slav. The basic idea: take the knight once it gets to f6 and play for a superior structure in a 'simple' position. An added advantage is that this line is not mentioned in theoretical works on the Slav. ■

Jan Timman

# Launch Pad

Magnus Carlsen and Wesley So made their debuts in the C-Group, in 2004 and 2009, respectively. Over the years, the lower sections of the Tata Steel Festival have been a launch pad for illustrious careers. **JAN TIMMAN** takes a look at two talents that debuted in this year's Top-10 group.

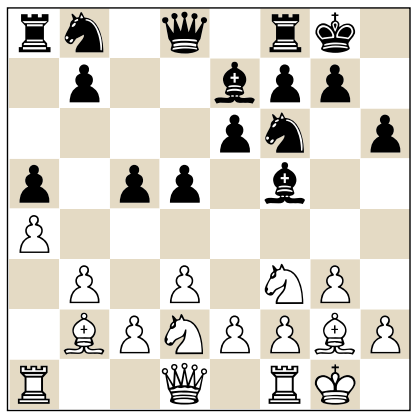
The 11-year-old Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa caused a stir last year by beating GM Axel Bachmann from Paraguay in 18 moves as Black in the Isle of Man (see New In Chess 2016/8, pp. 10/11). It goes without saying that there were comparisons with Fischer, who had played his immortal game against Donald Byrne 60 years earlier. Leonard Barden, in *The Guardian*, observed: 'That game (...) was of much higher quality, with deeply calculated knight and queen sacrifices, but Fischer was 13 against 11, while Praggnanandhaa's last dozen or so moves were almost all first choices of the computer and he saw and was ready for better defences missed by his opponent'. It's a good thing when a young player sees a lot and can talk intelligently about his games.

Some months before the Isle of Man tournament, the Indian phenomenon had become the youngest IM ever, inevitably making you wonder whether he will also become the youngest-ever GM. That record is held firmly by Karjakin, who was 12 years and seven months old when he made the final norm. Our contributor Negi was almost 10 months older. He just pipped Carlsen, who was five days older again when he qualified for the title. Praggnanandhaa will probably break both his compatriot's and Carlsen's record. To break that of Karjakin, he will have to have made his norms before February 10th 2018, which constitutes an extra reason to keep a sharp eye on his performance.

His game against Bachmann might lead you to the erroneous conclusion that Praggnanandhaa is growing into an attacking player, but the majority of his games show a different picture: he is more of a positional player who tries to find his own way in the opening. As White he often plays side openings. This winter he played in two venerable tournaments: Hastings and Wijk aan Zee. In Hastings he claimed another grandmaster scalp in the final round. His game against the experienced Dane Rasmussen was quite worthwhile.

**Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa**
**Allan Rasmussen**
Hastings 2016/17
Réti, King's Indian Attack

**1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.0-0 e6 5.d3 h6 6.♘bd2 ♗e7 7.b3 0-0 8.♗b2 a5 9.a3 c5 10.a4**

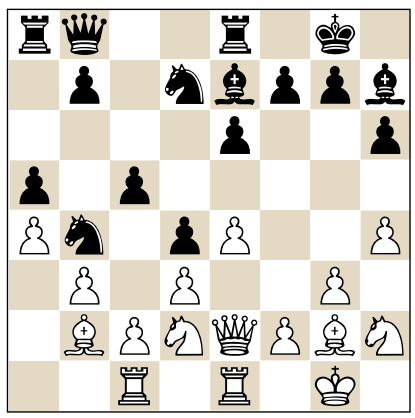


A positional move. White correctly fixes the queenside, although with the drawback that Black now gets square b4 for his queen's knight. The standard plan was 10.♘e5 ♘c6, with chances of getting an advantage.

**10...♘c6 11.♖e1 ♗h7 12.e4 ♖e8 13.♕e2 ♘b4 14.♖ac1 ♘d7 15.h4 ♕b8**

This is also standard. Black is aiming for ...b7-b5.

**16.♘h2 d4**



**17.e5**

Double-edged. White opens the long diagonal for his king's bishop, but this also breathes new life into the

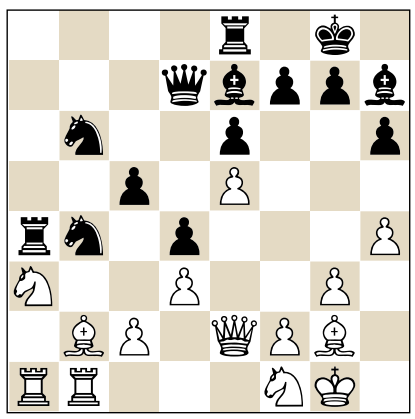
black queen's bishop. The alternative was 17.♘c4.

**17...♖a6**

Black continues to aim for the advance of his b-pawn. He could also have played 17...♘b6, intending to take the knight to d5.

**18.♘c4 b5 19.axb5 ♕xb5 20.♖a1 a4 21.bxa4 ♖xa4 22.♘f1 ♘b6 23.♘a3 ♕d7 24.♖eb1**

The correct plan, but the wrong execution. It was indeed necessary to transfer the rook to the queenside, since the scene of the battle is there. But the correct way was 24.♖ec1, to give the c-pawn extra cover.



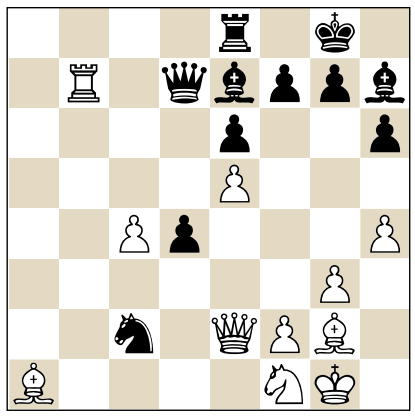
**24...c4!**

Black pounces at once.

**25.♘xc4 ♘xc4 26.dxc4 ♖xa1**

Now White gets his way after all. It would have been better for Black to have White swap the rooks, but Rasmussen probably thought he would have nothing special after 26...♘xc2 27.♖xa4 ♕xa4 28.♗e4. But Black had the venomous intermediate move 27...d3!, yielding him a large advantage, since it makes the passed d-pawn very strong.

**27.♗xa1 ♘xc2 28.♖b7**



Praggnanandhaa probably had this position in mind when he went for his 24th move. White has sufficient counterplay.

**28...♕c8 29.♗b2 d3 30.♕f3 ♔f8 31.♕f4 ♗f5 32.g4**

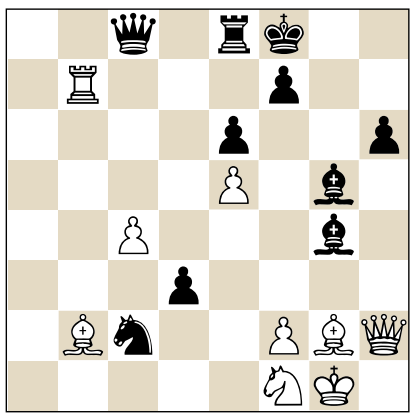
Sharply played. The alternative was 32.♘d2, after which the position is roughly equal.

**32...g5**

Black isn't averse to sharpening the fight either; but he could also safely have withdrawn his bishop.

**33.hxg5 ♗xg5 34.♕h2 ♗xg4**

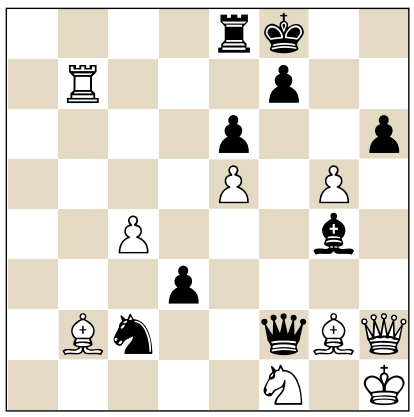
Black has won a pawn, but now White takes the initiative.



**35.f4!**

Praggnanandhaa is well aware that he needn't fear the penetration of the black queen.

**35...♕c5+ 36.♔h1 ♕f2 37.fxg5**



**37...♘e1?**

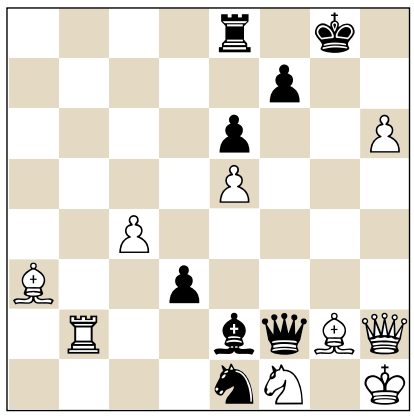
In such hyper-sharp positions with both kings unsafe, it is important to create threats. In that respect, the text-move does not qualify.

After 37...♗f3! the game would probably have finished in a draw. White is forced to sacrifice his rook with 38.♖xf7+!, and after 38...♔xf7 39.♕f4+ ♔g8 40.♕xf3 Black is forced to swap the queens. The resulting endgame is slightly easier for White, but a draw seems inevitable.

**38.♗a3+** Both players were surely in time-trouble here. With 38.g6! White could have won at once.

**38...♔g8 39.♖b2 ♗e2 40.gxh6**

The notorious 40th move. 40.♕g3 would have secured the win.



**40...♘c2**

And Black goes astray as well. He should have played his knight to

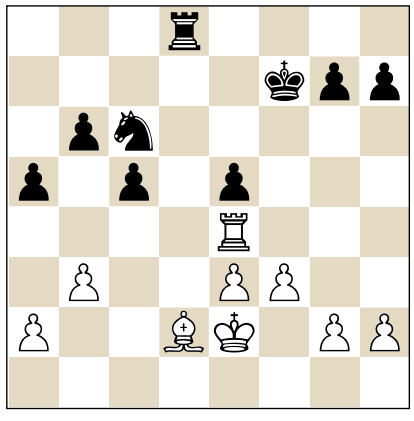
NEW IN CHESS

**The text on Praggnanandha's T-shirt reads: 'The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.' (G.K. Chesterton)**

the other side: 40...♘f3, when a liquidation to a draw will be inevitable: 41.♗c5 ♘xh2 42.♗xf2 ♘xf1 43.♗xf1 ♗xf1 44.♗e3. White still has vague winning chances, but they don't amount to much.
After the text White is given free rein to strike after all.
**41.h7+ ♔g7 42.♗e7 ♗f3 43.♗f6+ ♔g6 44.♗xf3** 1-0.
This victory propelled Praggnanandhaa to shared second place with four wins and five draws.

In Wijk aan Zee, he played in the Top-10 group. This group usually gets little attention, since all eyes tend to be on the two main events. Yet, it is here that the stars of the future play. The fight for first place was between Praggnanandhaa and 15-year-old Lucas van Foreest. The young Indian won five games but lost two, allowing Van Foreest to pip him by half a point. Praggnanandhaa's losses showed up the weak spots he still has. Against the young Dutchman Hing Ting Lai he lost straight from the opening. In the other game he lost, he stumbled in an equal endgame.

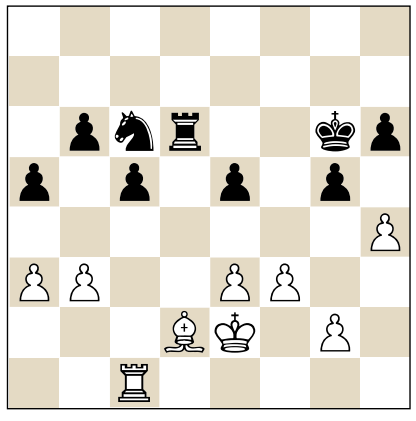
**Thibaut Maenhout**
**Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa**
Wijk aan Zee 2017



position after 31.♗xd2

The endgame may be slightly easier for White, but Black is hardly in danger of losing.

**31...g5** A step in the wrong direction. Black unnecessarily weakens his kingside.
**32.h4 h6 33.♖c4 ♖g8 34.♖g4 ♔f6 35.a3 ♖d8 36.♖c4 ♖d6 37.♖c1 ♔g6**



**38.♖c4**
White decides to aim for the advance of his b-pawn after all, but the ensuing rook ending hardly offers him any chances. Correct was 38.♗c3, followed by transferring the rook to the h-file.

A GRANDMASTER AMONG UNIVERSITIES.

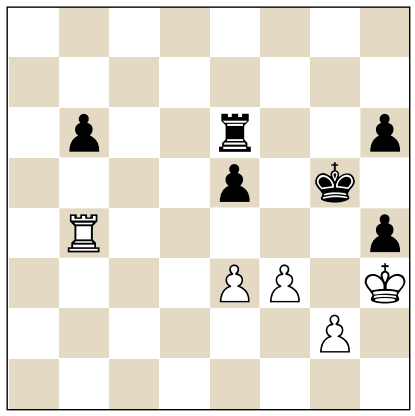
If you're interested in playing chess at an American university, we want to hear from you. The University of Texas at Dallas offers highly competitive scholarships to master-level players. For more information, please contact Program Director Jim Stallings at james.stallings@utdallas.edu at least one year in advance of your intended fall enrollment date.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
CHESS TEAM

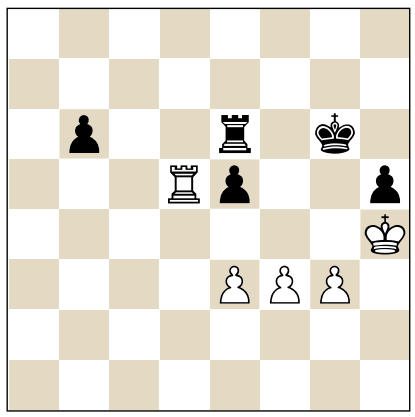
chess.utdallas.edu

UT DALLAS

**38...♔f6 39.b4 cxb4 40.axb4 axb4 41.♗xb4 ♘xb4 42.♖xb4 ♔g6 43.♔f2 ♔h5**
There was nothing against taking on h4, after which the game is drawn immediately.
**44.♔g3 ♖e6 45.♖b5 gxh4+ 46.♔h3 ♔g5 47.♖b4**
White has achieved virtually nothing, but continues to hope that his opponent will make a mistake.



**47...h5?**
Too many pawn moves! Black could safely have played his rook to and fro on the sixth rank. If White captures on h4, he advances his b-pawn and puts his rook behind it.
**48.♖b5**
A unique situation. Black is in zugzwang and will be unable to hold the endgame, despite his extra pawn. Advancing his h6-pawn has made his h-pawns so weak that they will both be lost.
**48...♔f5 49.♔xh4 ♔g6 50.g3 ♔h6 51.♖d5 ♔g6**



**52.f4**
The final blow. White is getting two connected passed pawns.
**52...♔f5 53.♔xh5 ♔e4 54.♖b5 ♖e8 55.♖xb6 ♔xe3 56.f5 e4 57.♖b3+ ♔d4 58.f6 e3 59.f7 ♖h8+ 60.♔g6 e2 61.♖b1 ♔d3 62.♔g7 ♖b8 63.♖h1 ♔e3 64.f8♕ ♖xf8 65.♔xf8 ♔f3 66.♖e1**
1-0.

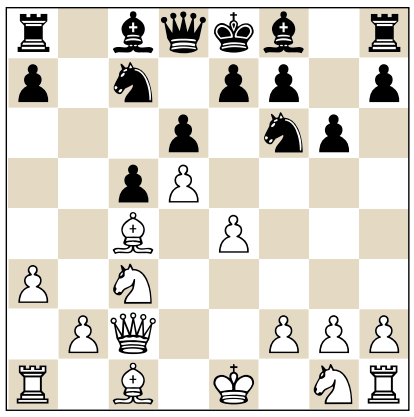
ALINA L'AMI

**The younger brother of Dutch Champion Jorden van Foreest, 15-year-old Lucas, qualified for next year's Challengers.**

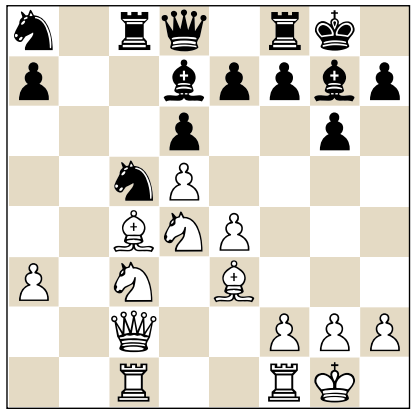
Van Foreest played a brisk game against the same opponent.

**Lucas van Foreest**
**Thibaut Maenhout**
Wijk aan Zee 2017
Benko Gambit

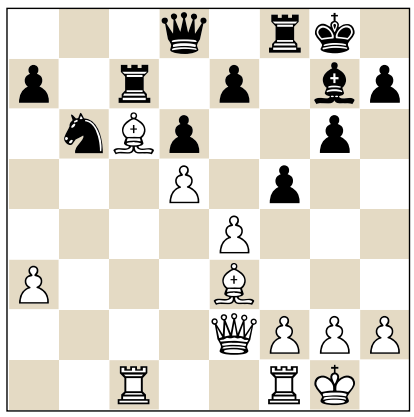
**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.♕c2 ♘a6 5.a3 bxc4 6.e4 g6 7.♗xc4 ♘c7 8.♘c3 d6**



**9.♘ge2**
White opts for an interesting set-up that Mamedyarov had already tried before. The traditional plan in this system is to aim for e4-e5. With the text, White announces his intention to aim for b2-b4.
**9...♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.b4 ♘d7**
Black's best chance for equality was probably 11...♗a6, intending to swap bishops to relieve the pressure.
**12.bxc5 ♘xc5 13.♗e3 ♗d7 14.♘d4 ♖c8**
The start of an elaborate plan. 14...e6 would have yielded better chances of counterplay.
**15.♖ac1 ♘a8**



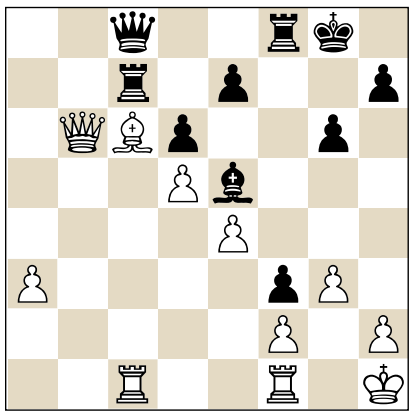
**16.♗b5!**
The correct plan. He is going to take his knight to c6.
**16...♘b6 17.♘c6 ♗xc6 18.♗xc6 ♗xc3 19.♗xc5!**
An important intermediate exchange. White keeps his dominant bishop pair.
**19...♗g7 20.♗e3 ♖c7 21.♕e2 f5**



**22.♕a6**
An experienced grandmaster would undoubtedly have swapped on f5 here; opening the position favours

the player with the bishop pair. The text yields White a pawn, but allows Black some counterplay.

**22...f4 23.♗xb6 axb6 24.♕xb6 f3 25.g3 ♕c8 26.♔h1 ♗e5**



**27.♖g1**

This rook move looks like a defensive measure, but in reality sets a cunning trap.

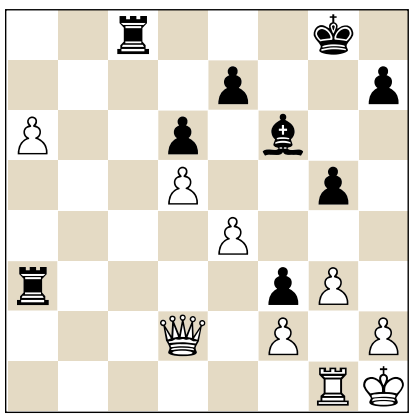
**27...g5?**

And Black falls for it. 27...♕b8 would have kept his drawing chances alive.

**28.♗d7!**

The point of the previous move. With White's king's rook covered, this petite combinaison is winning.

**28...♖xc1 29.♗xc8 ♖cxc8 30.a4 ♖c4 31.a5 ♗d4 32.♕b3 ♖c3 33.♕a2 ♖fc8 34.♕d2 ♗f6 35.a6 ♖a3**



**36.e5!**

An elegant move to round things off.

**36...♗xe5 37.♕xg5+ ♔h8 38.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 39.♕xc1 ♖a5 40.h4**

1-0.

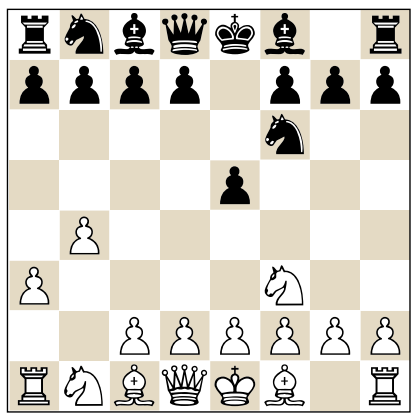
Lucas van Foreest generally played solidly and strongly, remaining unbeaten and scoring four wins. His victory was the only bright spot for the Netherlands in Wijk aan Zee. None of the other local players made a significant impact in the two main groups. There had been high expectations for Jorden van Foreest – Lucas's elder brother by two years – in the Challengers, but he turned out to be completely off form.

After the tournament, Magnus Carlsen gave a benefit simul on 36 boards in the Sophia Child Hospital in Rotterdam. It was a difficult afternoon for the World Champion. Kasparov always sets strict rating restrictions for his opponents when he has to do a simul with a large number of boards. Carlsen does not, so all kinds of things can go wrong. In the end, he was forced to allow five draws and suffered three defeats.

Lucas van Foreest is actually far too strong to participate in such a simul, but he still took his place in Rotterdam.

**Magnus Carlsen**
**Lucas van Foreest**
Rotterdam simul 2017
Sokolsky

**1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.b4 e5 3.a3**

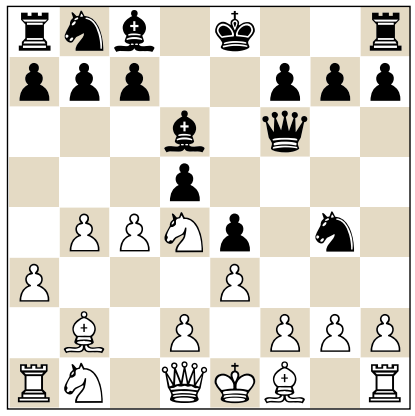


Carlsen probably didn't know he was facing such a strong player; otherwise he would surely have gone for a more serious opening.

**3...e4 4.♘d4 d5 5.e3 ♘g4**

Tempting. But 5...a5 and 5...c5 would probably have been more suitable to punish White's careless play.

**6.♗b2 ♗d6 7.c4 ♕f6**



**8.♕e2**

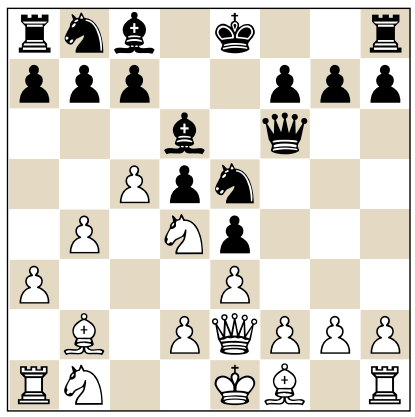
Carlsen's concentration must have lapsed here. 8.f4 was forced, after which the position will be dynamically balanced. A nice computer variation: 8...♘c6 9.♘b5! ♕xb2 10.♘1c3 d4 11.♘a4 ♘f2! 12.♘xb2 ♘xd1 13.♖xd1, and the position is approximately equal.

**8...♘e5**

Even stronger was 8...♘bc6, intending to take the other knight to e5. Now White could still have withdrawn his queen, but who would do such a thing?

**9.c5**

And there you are; he doesn't.



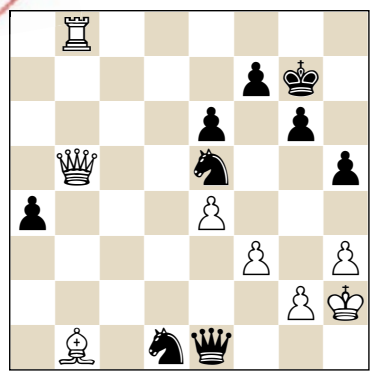
**9...♘d3+**

Of course. White has to give his queen, but he gets far too little in the way of compensation.

**10.♕xd3 exd3 11.cxd6 c6 12.♗xd3 ♕xd6 13.0-0 0-0 14.♘c3 ♘d7 15.f4 ♘f6 16.♘ce2 a5 17.♗c3 axb4 18.axb4 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 g6 20.h3 ♘e4 21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♖a7 b6 23.♘g3 ♖e8 24.b5 cxb5 25.♘xb5 ♕c5 26.♘d4 b5 27.♖a8 b4 28.♗b2 ♕d5 29.♖a4 ♕c4 30.♗c3 bxc3**

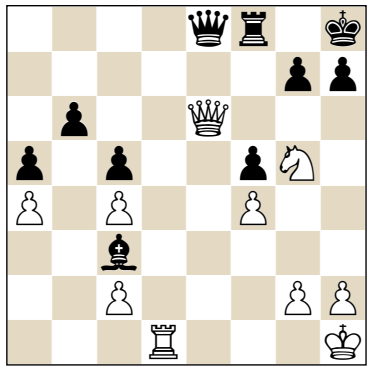
0-1. ■

# MAXIMize your Tactics Solutions



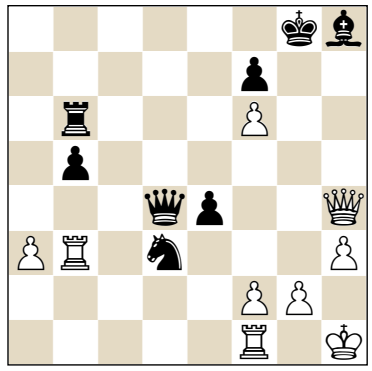
**1. Khader-Tissir**
Marrakesh 2016

**46...♘xf3+! 47.gxf3 ♕f2+ 48.♔h1 ♕xf3+** 48...♕g3 at once would also do. **49.♔h2 ♕f2+ 50.♔h1 ♕g3!** White resigned.



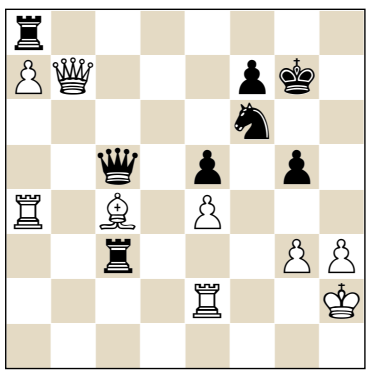
**2. Abergel-Lazov**
Novi Sad 2016

**28.♘f7+ ♔g8** Of course, the knight is untouchable. **29.♘h6+ ♔h8 30.♖d8! ♕xd8 31.♕g8+! ♖xg8 32.♘f7** Smothered mate.



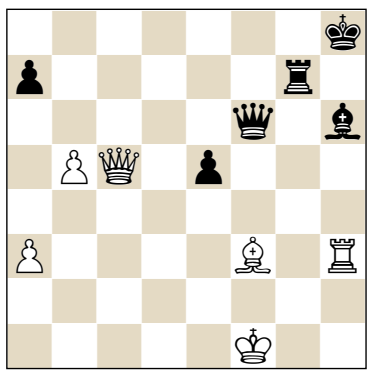
**3. Rathnakaran-Narayanan**
Novi Sad 2016

**42.♕g4+ ♔h7** 42...♔f8 43.♕c8+ **43.♖xd3! ♕xd3 44.♖d1** If the queen retreats then 45.♕h5+ ♔g8 46.♖d8+ mates.



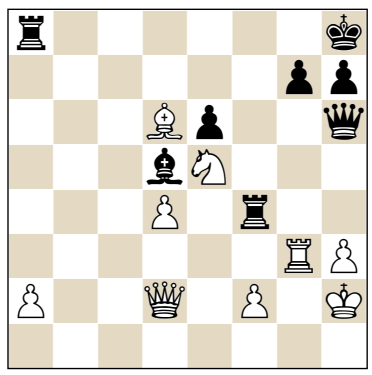
**4. Skoberne-Alvir**
Böblingen 2016

47...♖xc4 is for nerds: **47...♘g4+! 48.♔g2** 48.hxg4 ♖h8+ 49.♔g2 ♖xg3+ etc. **48...♖xg3+! 49.♔xg3 ♕g1+ 50.♔f3 ♕f1+ 51.♔g3** 51.♔xg4 ♕f4+ 52.♔h5 ♖h8# **51...♕f4+ 52.♔g2 ♕h2+ 53.♔f3 ♕xh3** Mate.



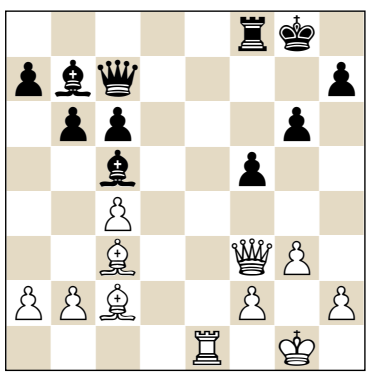
**5. Y.Atabayev-Bosiocic**
Doha World Rapid Ch 2016

The game saw 45.♕c6 with a draw on move 57. White missed a chance to win by **45.♖xh6+! ♕xh6 46.♕f8+ ♔h7 47.♗e4+ ♖g6 48.♕xh6+ ♔xh6 49.♗xg6 ♔xg6 50.a4 ♔f6 51.a5 ♔e6 52.b6 axb6 53.a6!**.



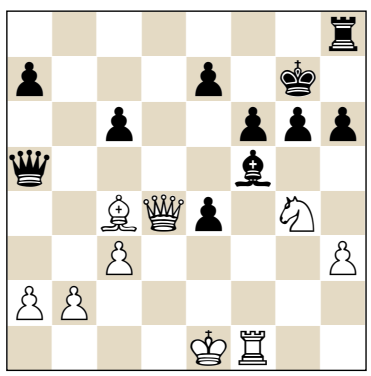
**6. Fier-Cheng**
Hastings 2016

**36.♘f7+! ♖xf7 37.♕xh6 ♖xa2** Or 37...gxh6 38.♗e5+ ♖g7 39.♖xg7. **38.♕c1!** It's essential to defend against 38...♖axf2+. **38...♖fxf2+ 39.♔g1 ♖ac2 40.♕g5 ♖g2+ 41.♖xg2** Black resigned.



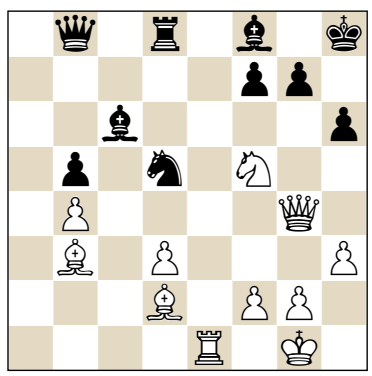
**7. Sjugirov-Yudin**
Khanty-Mansiysk 2016

**26.b4! ♗xb4!?** Otherwise 27.c5. **27.c5!** 27.♗xb4 c5 **27...♗xc3 28.♗b3+ ♔g7** 28...♔h8 29.♕xc3+ ♕g7 30.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 31.♖e7+ **29.♕xc3+ ♔h6 30.cxb6** and Black soon resigned, in view of 30...axb6 31.♕b4! with the idea ♖e7 and ♕h4+.



**8. Dobrov-Lu Shanglei**
Wijk aan Zee 2017

White could have simplified with **27.♘xf6! exf6 28.♖xf5! gxf5** (28...♕xf5 29.♕xa7+) **29.♕d7+** (even stronger is 29.♕g1+! ♔f8 30.♕g6) **29...♔g6 30.♕f7+ ♔g5 31.♕g7+ ♔f4 32.♕xh8**. Instead, he played 27.♘e3 and later lost.



**9. Vocaturo-Satyapragyan**
Sitges 2016

29.♕h5 should win, but we are here to MAXIMize our tactics! **29.♘xh6! gxh6 30.♗xd5 ♖xd5 31.♗c3+ ♔h7 32.♖e7! ♖g5** 32...♗e8 33.♕e4+ **33.♖xf7+ ♔g8 34.♕e6! ♕h2+! 35.♔f1!** 35.♔xh2?? ♖xg2+ 36.♔h1 ♖g6+ Now Black resigned.

Sadler on Books

# Of openings, kids and old men

From 'When reading this I already feel a bit stressed' to 'I read it cover to cover in a couple of hours!', Matthew Sadler happily shares his emotions as he reviews the latest books.

Indeed, it's openings, kids and old men this time! We start off with an opening book quite unlike any other I've seen before: *The Fianchetto Solution* by Neiman and Shoker. Emmanuel Neiman is a French FIDE Master (rated 2264) who collaborated with Yochanan Afek on the excellent *Invisible Chess Moves*, while Samy Shoker is a young Egyptian GM currently rated 2498. The subject of the book is a repertoire based on 1.♘f3, 2.g3, 3.♗g2 and 4.0-0 followed mostly by 5.d3 and 6.0-0 for White and 1...g6, 2...♗g7 with Black against pretty much everything. The concept can best be explained by the authors themselves:

'This is a repertoire book, but also a middlegame book... It is also a tactics book that will enable you to work with the specific themes relative to the king's fianchetto (how to defend against an attack, how to get your bishop to play when it is blocked, etc.) so that hopefully you will be able to navigate safely between the lines, knowing where to go throughout the game.'

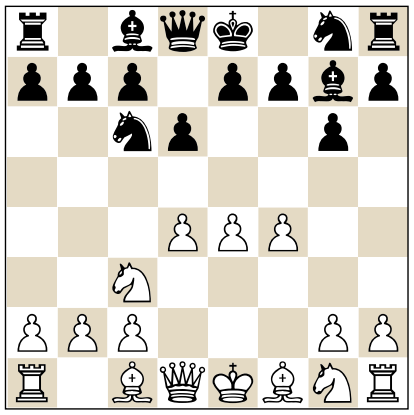
'In some cases, there was disagreement between the authors. Samy Shoker is an enterprising player, he likes complicated play and tactics. Emmanuel Neiman is a solid player, he likes simplicity. Whenever we disagreed on an opening, mostly because Samy Shoker was offering an ambitious line, and Emmanuel Neiman found it too risky, we have suggested an alternative solid option.'

Sounds interesting, doesn't it? An opening book that bestows attention on the middlegame and tactical themes arising from the first moves, and two authors with different playing styles offering advice from their own playing perspectives. Does it work though? During my first read-through, I might have gone for a dubious maybe but second time around, I was much less keen.

As you can imagine, there is a lot of information being presented from different phases of the game and by players of different strengths. The big risk is that the reader will get lost in a mass of unrelated and contradictory information and not be able to perceive what is actually being recommended... And that's what happened with me! I'll just give you an example:

Chapter 1 is a 40-page thematic overview of the King's Fianchetto structure including 8 tactical exercises. Lots of different openings in there but not much at all from the repertoire in the book. I wasn't sure it would be easy for amateur players to relate the information in this chapter to the openings recommended, but I might be wrong on that. With Chapter 2, we start on Black's repertoire against 1.e4 starting off with the Austrian Attack (1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4).

The authors – well, as we will see, only Shoker, in fact – recommend 4...♘c6.



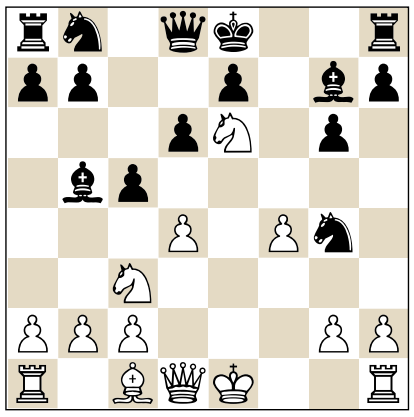
The comment next to 4...♘c6 is 'Black chooses a provocative option: a direct attack with his pieces against d4. For a safer (better! EN) option, see 4...♘f6 further in the chapter'

To be honest, while reading this I'm already feeling a bit stressed. I've just grabbed a couple of hours after a long work day to do a bit of chess and now even the authors can't agree on what I should look at. Am I wasting my time if I look at 4...♘c6 ? So I skip on to the section 'The solid option: 4...♘f6 and 5...0-0 against the Austrian Attack'.

First of all, you read this: 'We will not work out all the intricacies of the modern theory because it is not our repertoire choice. Yet, we offer you a short review of the main lines – if

needed, you can find more information in the books by Moskalenko (The Perfect Pirc-Modern) and Hillarp Persson (The Modern Tiger)'.

Then, on the same page you see this diagram:



Your first thought is... is this meant to be solid? Then you realise that this isn't supposed to be the solid recommendation – 4...♘f6 5.♘f3 0-0 – but another line the authors have thrown in as well: 5...c5 6.e5 ♘g4 7.♗b5+ ♗d7 8.e6 fxe6 9.♘g5 ♗xb5 10.♘xe6.

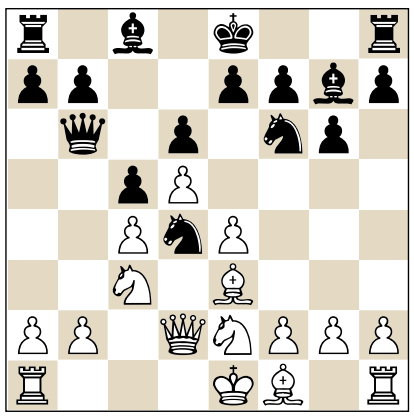
You read on a little further and see the following line given: 4...♘f6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e3 b6 7.♕d2 ♗b7 8.e5 ♘g4 9.0-0-0 c5 'leads to complications. Black gives up a pawn in order to be able to open some lines against the enemy king'

It's a bit confusing to be honest. I'm also somewhat dubious about the general quality of the analysis / judgments. One example I came across was in the repertoire against 1.d4:

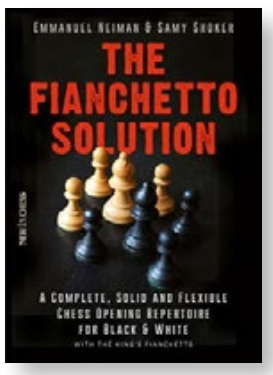
**1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.e4 ♘c6 5.d5 ♘d4**

5...♘e5 is presented first briefly by the authors, but I wasn't sure at all whether 5...♘e5 was the main recommendation or 5...♘d4.

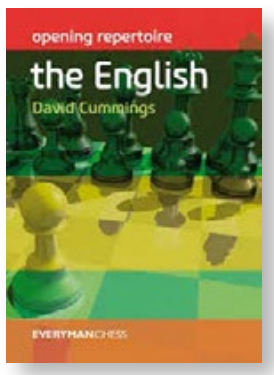
**6.♗e3 c5 7.♘ge2 ♕b6 8.♕d2 ♘f6**



**The Fianchetto Solution by Neiman & Shoker**
**New In Chess 2016**
★★☆☆☆


EMMANUEL NEIMAN & SAMY SHOKER
THE FIANCHETTO SOLUTION
A COMPLETE, SOLID AND FLEXIBLE CHESS OPENING REPERTOIRE FOR BLACK & WHITE

**The English by David Cummings**
**Everyman Chess 2016**
★★★☆☆




and now the order of lines given is very strange. 9.♖d1 ♗g4 10.f3 ♗xf3 is given as the main line 'and White is worse' but the essential refutation of this line: 9.f3 ♘d7 10.♖d1 0-0 11.b3 ♘xe2 12.♗xe2, which I first had on the board in 1993, is given as a side line and equal. Tiger Hillarp Persson gives the correct assessment in his excellent *The Modern Tiger*.

In conclusion, a bit of a wild, chaotic ride this one. There is also some interesting material but it would really need a lot of tightening up to become the book it aspires to be.

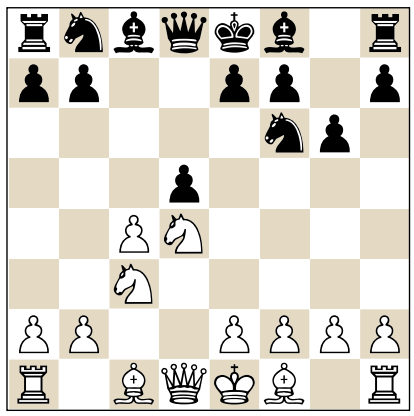
■ ■ ■

The next book on the agenda is *The English* by David Cummings (Everyman Chess). It came as a bit of a

**In the current age of super-strong engines, short lines with an evaluation of 'is unclear' are not really acceptable any more.**

shock learning that David Cummings is Canadian – I thought he was English! In his own playing career, the author has oscillated between 1.d4 (1994-98 & 2014-2015) 1.c4 (2001-2002, 2010-2012) and 1.♘f3 (1997-98, 2000, 2002) and that's reflected in his repertory choices, which advocate transpositions to 1.d4 openings against the Dutch and KID as well as many systems with an early ♘f3. For example, Cummings' recommendation against 1.c4 c5 is 2.♘f3.

In many ways, it's an excellent book. The production quality is superb with nice big print and plenty of diagrams, which makes it very easy to read without sight of the board. Cummings has also clearly put a lot of work into certain aspects of the book, most notably the early move orders (a crucial aspect of playing the English). For example, against 1...c5, Cummings wants to play systems with an early d4, but doesn't want to allow the Grünfeld players to play 1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 d5.

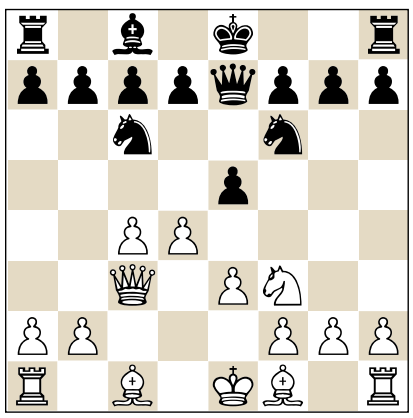


Cummings recommends 4.e4, which more or less forces Black into a Maroczy Bind after 4...♗g7 5.d4. Very effective! There's someone who understands his opening, and there's loads of that all through the book.

The book is somewhat weaker, however, when it comes to original analysis. Looking at the books on my table next to me – Negi's Grandmaster Repertoire series, Hillarp Persson's *The Modern Tiger*, Avrukh's *The Catalan* – I can see that I've been rather spoiled by the excellence of Quality Chess' offerings! They have

set the standard for opening manuals; it's not really fair to expect the same level from other publishers, and of course not every book aspires to that level of detail. However, in the current age of super-strong engines, where opening play has become so concrete, short lines with an evaluation of 'is unclear' are not really acceptable any more. I'll show you the first example that caught my eye:

**1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗b4 5.♕c2 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 ♕e7** Here Cummings recommends the uncommon **7.d4**

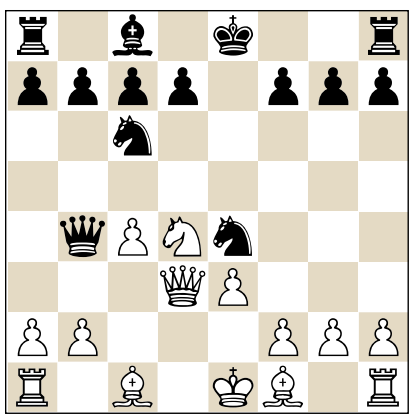


as his main recommendation. I've only got 35 games in my database, so it's a brave choice with a lot of territory that won't be covered by practical experience.

**7...♘e4** This is the critical test according to Cummings, who analyses the alternatives in two previous games. So far, Cummings has done a great job.

**8.♕d3 exd4 9.♘xd4** Here Cummings postulates two alternatives: 9...♕b4+ and 9...0-0 (the main game). Let's focus on 9...♕b4+, which poses White with an immediate challenge.

**9...♕b4+**



Three grandmaster games so far, in which White has scored 2½/3.

**10.♔e2** was played once. Cummings gives this comment:

'10...♘c5 11.♕c2 was played in J. Oms Palisse – F. Lopez Garcia, Zaragoza 2010, and now 11...♘e5 12.b3 ♕b6 13.♗a3 is unclear.'

Cummings gives the main line as

**10.♗d2**

which he describes 'as safer but rather dry. 10...♕xd2+ 11.♕xd2 ♘xd2 12.♔xd2 d6 13.♘b5 ♔d8 D. Flores-S. Fedorchuk, Lorca 2007 and here 14.♗e2 gives White perhaps a little something to play with.'

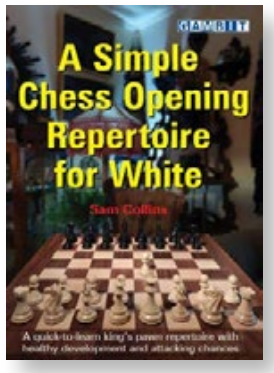
That felt too light to me analytically for the main recommendation against this line, and also rather equivocal. Is 10.♗d2 better than 10.♔e2? Is 10.♔e2 too risky, or just good enough? What does the author think? The line suggested against 10.♔e2 is not human at all – in a practical game, you'd expect a human opponent to look to open lines against that king either with 10...♘xd4 11.exd4 ♘d6 or with 10...d5, against both of which White needs to prepare carefully. And if 10.♗d2 is the best way to play, then a little more guidance is required in the endgame. Because Magnus exists, we believe in the power of minute edges, but normal mortals definitely need help to get started!

In summary, lots of good stuff but just a little too superficial in the areas where practical experience is scanty.

■ ■ ■

Our final opening book is Sam Collins' *A Simple Chess Opening Repertoire for White* (Gambit). This short volume of 157 pages is based around White openings leading to the Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP) structure (and the related pawn structures of the Isolated Pawn Couple and Hanging Pawns). The book starts off with a quick 13-page overview of the IQP structure, using four illustrative games, and then the remaining chapters are dedicated to 1...e5, the c3 Sicilian, the Caro-Kann, the French,

**A Simple Opening Repertoire for White by Sam Collins Gambit 2016**
★★★★☆




the Pirc/Modern, the Scandinavian and the Alekhine.

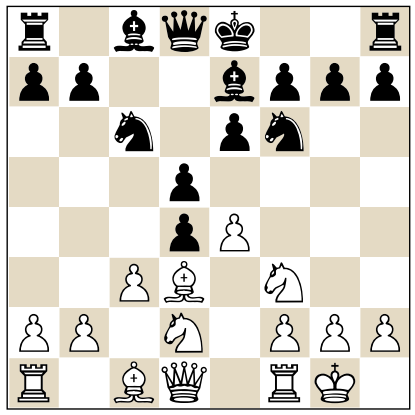
I liked the book a lot. There's barely any reliance on opening trickery at all – the only line I was slightly unsure about was Jonny Hector's offbeat gambit continuation

**Because Magnus exists, we believe in the power of minute edges, but normal mortals definitely need help to get started!**

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b4+ 7.♘bd2, which seems the sort of thing that might get neutralised reasonably quickly once it gets known and tested at the highest level. For the rest, Collins advocates logical, rapid development play and aims resolutely for various incarnations of the Isolated Queen's Pawn structure. It's a repertory that promotes good habits, and I'd definitely recommend this book to anyone of an attacking bent looking for 1.e4 openings that won't require too much maintenance.

Just one thing caught my attention while I was reading through it. Collins recommends 3.♘d2 against the French and presents one of his own games against Teeuwen from Kilkenny 2013:

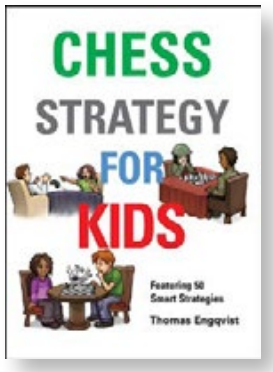
**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♗e7 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.0-0 cxd4**



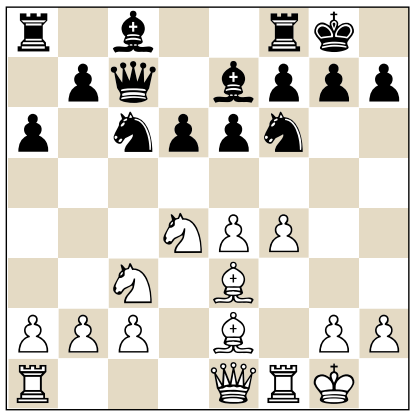
I might be wrong, but I always thought that this is an inaccurate move order for Black, as White – apart from going for the IQP with 8.cxd4 – can also play **8.e5** when after 8...♘d7 9.cxd4, Black has probably taken on d4 a little earlier than he would have wanted. That little remark aside, recommended!

■ ■ ■

**Chess Strategy for Kids by Thomas Engqvist Gambit 2016**
★★★☆☆



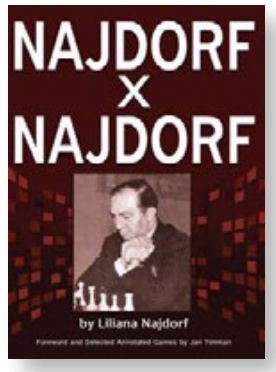

*Chess Strategy for Kids* by Thomas Engqvist (Gambit) isn't really for me anymore I guess, but it's still been enjoyable! I can imagine that this would have been a book I would have had with me continually as a keen 7-year-old learning chess. The book presents 50 so-called 'Smart Strategies' such as 'Piece Centralisation', 'Creating an Outpost for a Knight' and 'The Rook Lift' (I would definitely have liked that one!). Each strategy takes two pages and is explained with six diagrams and a short text underneath. As always there are some things that make you raise your eyebrows a little. In particular, the chapter on Overprotection is a little weird:



I'm not sure I've ever seen 11.♖d1 described as 'Overprotection'. I certainly don't think that this is what Nimzowitsch intended when he defined the concept. But on the other hand, centralising your pieces is not a bad reflex for kids to learn, so we'll let it pass! A good book for its purpose!

■ ■ ■

**Najdorf X Najdorf by Liliana Najdorf Russell Enterprises 2016**
★★★★☆




The last book is a lovely piece of chess lore: *Najdorf X Najdorf*.

I read it cover to cover in a couple of hours! During his life, Najdorf made some attempts to gather material for a biography but never really pushed the project through. Najdorf's daughter Liliana writes that 'in evoking his past, my father was reminded of its sadness, and I believe that is the reason he finally stopped work on the project.' After Najdorf's death in July 1997, Liliana decided to share her remembrances of her father, also drawing on the material previously gathered. It makes for a wonderful personal story, a worthy and moving tribute to the great man! Twelve games annotated by Jan Timman and some further recollections from chess and business colleagues round off a thoroughly enjoyable book! ■


## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Are you not yet a subscriber to New In Chess? Give it a try! Take out a subscription today on the premier chess magazine in the world, and receive 8 issues a year.
As a subscriber to the print edition, you can take an 'Extra' subscription to our digital edition for only €20/$24 per year. New In Chess Digital is available for iPad and Android tablets.

| | EUROPE | U.K. | U.S.A, CANADA, MEXICO | REST OF THE WORLD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1 year (8 issues)** | **€ 79.99** | **£ 59.99** | **$ 89.99** | **€ 79.99** |
| **2 years (16 issues)** | **€149.99** | **£119.99** | **$169.99** | **€149.99** |
| **3 years (24 issues)** | **€219.99** | **£169.99** | **$239.99** | **€219.99** |
| **Digital extra** (per year) | **€20.00** | **£18.00** | **$24.00** | **€20.00** |

**SUBSCRIBE DIRECTLY AT WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM**

New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093, 1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands. Phone: 0031-(0)72 512 7137, Fax 0031-(0)72 515 8234, www.newinchess.com, nic@newinchess.com

**USA and Canada only:** New In Chess c/o Land of Chess, 707 Skokie Blvd, Suite 600, Northbrook, IL 60062, Phone: 847-480-2780, www.newinchess.com, nic@newinchess.com
**Checks should be made payable to *Land of Chess***

Just Checking

# Anna Rudolf

**aka Miss Strategy**

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 12 November 1987

**PLACE OF BIRTH:** Miskolc, Hungary

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE:** Madrid, Spain

**What is your favourite city?**
Rome.

**What was the last great meal you had?**
Valentine's Day sushi with Joaquin.

**What drink brings a smile to your face?**
Mint tea.

**Which book would you give to a dear friend?**
*The Art of Learning* by Josh Waitzkin.

**What book is currently on your bedside table?**
*Eleven* by Mark Watson.

**What is your all-time favourite movie?**
*The Untouchables*.

**And your favourite TV series?**
*How I Met Your Mother*.

**Do you have a favourite actor?**
Russell Crowe and Matt Damon.

**And a favourite actress?**
Emma Stone.

**What music are you currently listening to?**
Reggaeton and upbeat songs – they always have the right effect. ☺

**Is there a work of art that moves you?**
Gaudí's architecture.

**What was your best result ever?**
Playing the tournament of my life for the first eight rounds of the Vandoeuvre Open, 2007.

**And the best game you played?**
Bauer-Rudolf, the same tournament.

**Who is your favourite chess player of all time?**
Judit Polgar, not 'only' for being the greatest female player of all time, but also because she is an amazing person I'm lucky to work with.

**Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?**
*Zlotnik's Chess: Knowledge, Training, Mastery*. It was the first book that made me sit down and work on my own.

**What is your favourite square?**
d5.

**What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?**
Learning from their mistakes.

**Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?**
A pen that brings you nice memories is always good to have.

**How many friends do you have on Facebook?**
1164.

**Who do you follow on Twitter?**
Chess players and chess sites. It's my primary source of information.

**What is your life motto?**
Reach for the stars – hard work and passion can take you anywhere.

**When were you happiest?**
One's wedding day seems to be a popular response, so I hope I can say that in the near future. ☺

**When was the last time you cried?**
Movies often make my eyes water.

**Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?**
A Hollywood actress or a Japanese piano virtuoso are both appealing to me.

**Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?**
James Corden, Mark Zuckerberg and Novak Djokovic.

**Is there something you'd love to learn?**
To play the piano.

**Where is your favourite place in the world?**
Wherever I can be with my loved ones.

**What is your greatest fear?**
Being alone in a dark place.

**And your greatest regret?**
I'm quite happy with the decisions I've taken and where my mistakes have brought me.

**How do you relax?**
I'm a fan of bubble baths and spas.

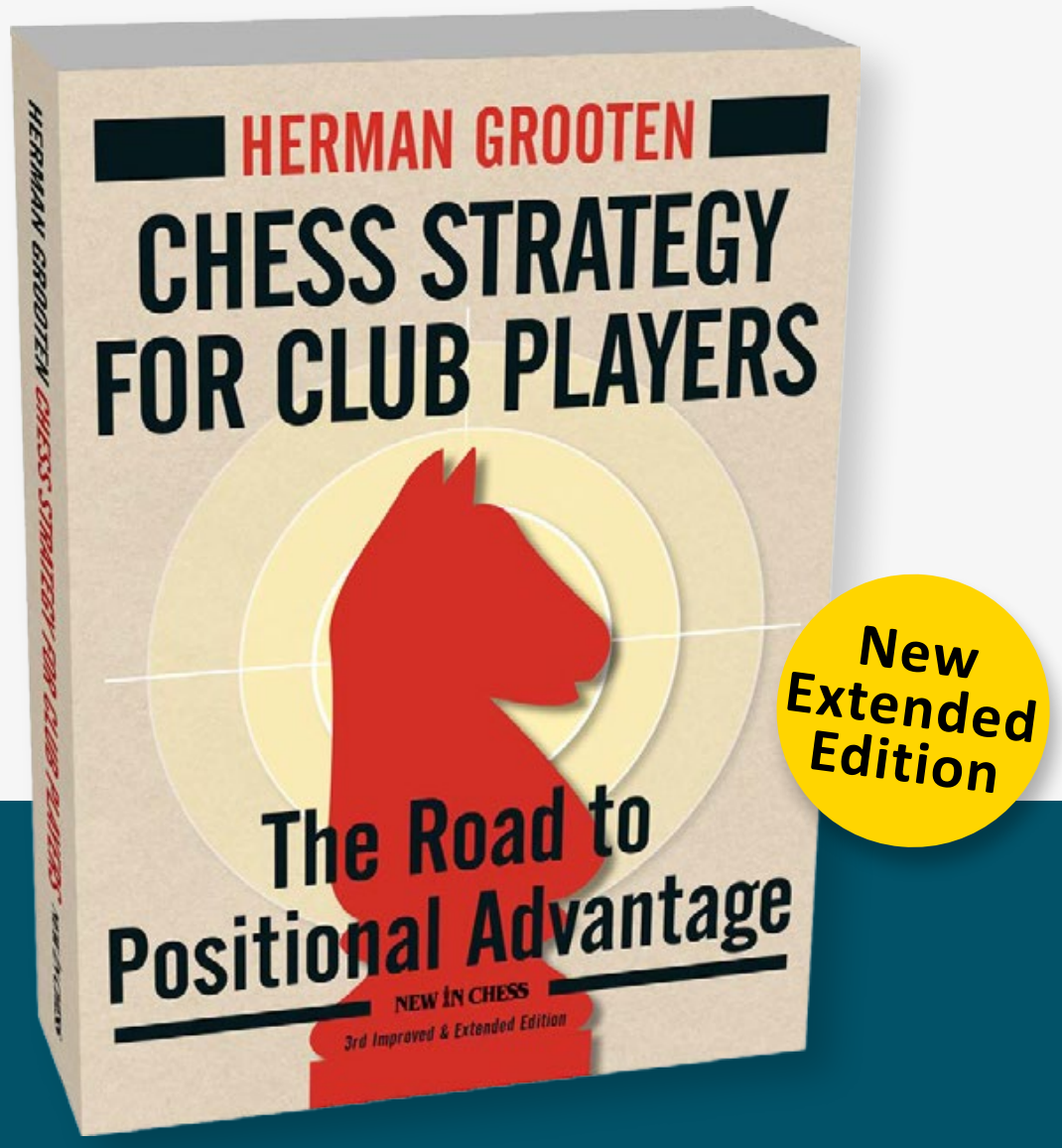
**What does it mean to be a chess player?**
To be a warrior who constantly needs to rise above himself/herself.

**Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?**
Certainly, e.g. in thinking rationally and planning ahead.

**What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?**
'Chess is not only about winning. Sometimes it's simply about learning. And so is life.'

# “If you want to be a better player, you owe it to yourself to pick up a copy’

***– Jeremy Silman, US Chess Online***




The new (3rd) edition of this modern classic has, besides various corrections and improvements, a new introduction and a brand-new chapter called ‘Total Control’. In this 35-page chapter IM Herman Grooten adds the final instructive brick to his formidable, yet very accessible, building: inspired by Tigran Petrosian’s playing style he explains amateurs how to exploit small advantages. And he provides a new set of exercises.

This book is not just a collection of middlegame positions, but a complete course that is well-structured, has great examples and exercises, is entertaining and extremely effective. Grooten’s bestseller was shortlisted for **The Guardian Chess Book of the Year** and awarded **ChessCafe Book of the Year**.

**paperback • 464 pages • €27.95 • available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com • a NEW IN CHESS publication**

# ICC Open 2017

**$12,000 in prizes!**

**Six weekend qualifiers: March 18 to April 2**

**Finals weekend: April 22-23**

www.chessclub.com/**iccopen**